THE BOBBSEY TWINS TREASURE HUNTING

LAURA LEE HOPE

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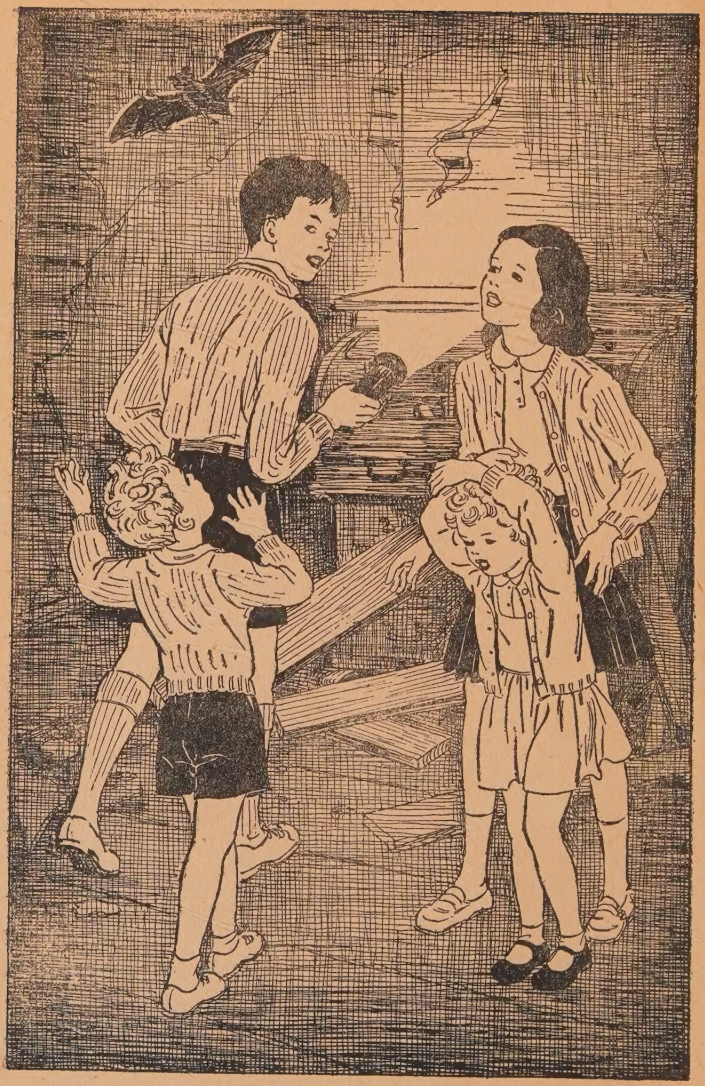

"Oh," cried Flossie. "What's that?"

The Bobbsey Twins Treasure Hunting

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BY

LAURA LEE HOPE

AUTHOR OF "THE BOBBSEY TWINS SERIES,"

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NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

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THE BOBBSEY TWINS TREASURE HUNTING

CHAPTER I

THE BIG SURPRISE

"RAINING! Raining! Oh, how it's raining!" shouted Flossie Bobbsey, as she pressed her little nose flat against the window glass to look out. "It's raining, but it can't wet my nose!" she recited in a sing-song voice.

"It's raining—it's pouring! The old man is snoring!" It was Freddie Bobbsey's turn now and he added his song to his sister's as he, also, put his face as close to the glass as he could get it, his nose, too, being quite flat. "Look, Flossie!" he called. "It looks just as if the rain was running down my nose, don't it?"

"Yes," agreed the other small twin, "it

does. Oh, but how it rains!" she exclaimed as a sheet of water dashed against the window and the wind blew harder.

"Nan and Bert will get sopping wet!" announced Freddie. "Nan will get wet and Bert will get wet but we won't get wet because we're in the house!"

"Oh, that's right!" exclaimed Flossie, being reminded of the older twins by what Freddie said. "Nan and Bert haven't got any umbrella or nothing. They'll get terribly wet!"

Flossie and Freddie turned aside from their nose-pressing for a moment to see who had entered the room behind them. It was Mrs. Bobbsey, and she heard what Flossie said about Bert and Nan having no umbrella.

"You don't mean to tell me that Bert and Nan are out in all this rain, do you?" asked the mother of the Bobbsey twins.

"Yes'm, Mother, they're out in it and they haven't got rubbers or nothing!" declared Freddie.

"Why, how careless of them!" Mrs. Bobbsey said. "They ought to know better than to go out in the rain without an umbrella or a rubber coat—or something."

"Oh, but it wasn't raining when they went out," Flossie explained.

"But it looked like it," said Freddie.

"Dear me!" murmured Mrs. Bobbsey, as she listened to the dashing of the rain and the howling of the wind. "Why did they go out?"

She, herself, had just come in. She had been downtown shopping. But she had had the small automobile and, though she was caught in the storm, she did not get wet, except a little in hurrying in from the garage to the house.

"We might be out in the rain, too," said Flossie; "only I waited for Freddie to find his fire engine and then it began to rain and we didn't go out. Dinah said we mustn't."

"Dinah was right," replied Mrs. Bobbsey, smiling at the fat, good-natured colored cook who just then came into the room to ask what she should cook for dinner.

" 'Deed an' I wouldn't let mah honey lambs go out when I knowed it were gwine to storm!" declared Dinah.

"How did you know it was going to rain, Dinah?" asked Flossie.

"'Cause I had de misery in mah big toe," answered the colored cook.

"Aunt Sallie Pry used to have the misery in her back," said Freddie. "Member, Flossie?"

"Sure," answered the golden-haired little girl. "She called it plumbago."

"*Lumbago,* my dear, not *plumbago,*" corrected Mrs. Bobbsey, with a smile. "Poor Aunt Sallie Pry! I haven't seen her for several weeks. She went away to visit some relations, I believe. But I wish Bert and Nan hadn't gone out in all this rain! My, it's a terrible storm!"

"They didn't go out in the *rain,* Mother," gently corrected the little girl. "It wasn't raining when they went out. And they always go out to play in the woods on Saturday, and this is Saturday."

"So it is—I had forgotten," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "It's too bad it had to rain on Saturday and spoil all your fun."

"It will soon be vacation," announced Freddie. "And won't you be glad of that, Flossie?"

"I just guess I will! Where are we going

this vacation, Mother?" she asked, turning back to the window to again press her little nose flat against the glass. "Are we going to the country or the seashore?"

"I don't know that your father has quite made up his mind," was the answer. "But are you sure Bert and Nan didn't take any umbrella?" she anxiously inquired.

"No, they didn't take nothing," said Freddie, earnestly enough if not correct in his talk. "They didn't have no umbrella, no rubbers, no nothing."

"We saw 'em go out," went on Flossie, "and we would have gone with 'em only they didn't want us and Dinah said we mustn't go. Anyway, Freddie wanted to take his toy fire engine and he couldn't find it."

"I'm glad he couldn't," stated Mrs. Bobbsey. "For then all my four twins would be out in the rain. It's bad enough to have two of them drenched."

"I like to get rained on in summer!" chuckled Freddie. "If we put our rubbers and coats on, Mother, could Flossie and I go out in the rain?"

"No, indeed! The storm is too hard!" de-

clared Mrs. Bobbsey. "But where did Nan and Bert go, do you know?"

"They went with Jimmie Bigfish and his sister Sunshine," said Flossie.

"Oh, the Indian children!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey. "Well, perhaps Jimmie and Sunshine may know of some place where they can go in with Bert and Nan to be sheltered from the storm."

"Indians don't mind the rain," droned Freddie in a sing-song tone. "I wish I was an Indian—I'd go out in the rain."

"Jimmie and Sunshine are only part Indian," declared Flossie.

"Well, part Indians don't mind going out in the rain!" hummed Freddie. "I wish I was half an Indian!" he sang.

"And I wish Bert and Nan were back home!" ejaculated Mrs. Bobbsey. "Did they say why they were going to the woods?" she wanted to know.

"For a surprise," announced Freddie mysteriously.

"A surprise!" exclaimed his mother.

"Yes, it's to be a big surprise," added Flossie. "We heard Nan and Bert say it

was to be a surprise when they started off."

"Who were they going to surprise?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Everybody," stated Flossie.

"You and Dinah and Sam and everybody!" added Freddie.

"What kind of a surprise?" Mrs. Bobbsey wanted to know.

But this question Flossie and Freddie could not answer. All they knew was that Nan and Bert, when they started off with the half-breed Indian children who lived near by, had spoken of a "big surprise for everybody."

"Well, I hope they come home soon and tell us what it is," Freddie said. "Maybe it's a surprise good to eat."

"How could they get anything good to eat in the woods?" Flossie demanded.

"There's lots of good things to eat in the woods," declared the little boy, whose hair was light and whose eyes were blue, like his twin sister's. "Jimmie Bigfish showed me how to dig up some artichoke roots that were good to eat."

"Pooh! Who wants to eat roots?" asked Flossie.

"You do! You like potatoes and you love peanuts," answered Freddie.

"Humph!" was Flossie's only reply to this.

Mrs. Bobbsey left the room, feeling rather anxious about Bert and Nan, though she thought the worst that could happen was that they would get wet through. But it was summer, and the rain, though pelting swiftly down, was warm, and the wind, though hard, was not cold.

"Oh, look at the gutter!" called Flossie, who, with her small brother, was again at the window, peering out. "It's full of water like a river!"

"So it is!" agreed her brother. "Oh, I wish I had my sailboat out there!"

"Let's go for it!" proposed Flossie, who was a daring little twin.

"It would be fun!" agreed Freddie, and he went to a closet where his playthings were kept and began delving among roller skates, balls, small tennis rackets, and the like. He found his sailboat and was carry-

ing it toward the door when Dinah saw him.

"Whut yo' gwine to do, honey lamb?" she asked.

"I'm going to sail my boat in the gutter. It's full of water!" Freddie replied.

"Like a river!" added Flossie.

"No, yo' all don't!" declared Dinah speaking as commandingly as Mrs. Bobbsey might have done. The colored cook had been in the family since before Flossie and Freddie were born, and very often she made them mind as their own mother might. "Yo' cain't go out in dis rain to sail boats or nuffin!" Dinah declared, and she waddled to the door and stood in front of it.

"Oh, please, Dinah!" pleaded the little boy. "I won't be a minute out there! I just want to see my boat sail!"

"We'll put on raincoats," offered Flossie.

"No, indeedy!" answered Dinah. "Yo' all know yo' maw won't let yo' go out in de rain!"

That was true, and the small twins, much disappointed, turned back into the room where they had been watching the storm through the window. Sadly, Freddie put his boat back in the closet.

"Well, we can play hide-and-go-seek, anyhow!" said Flossie, who was a bit sulky because of not being allowed to go out.

"Das all right. Play in de house much as yo' like," agreed Dinah. "But mah honey lambs mustn't go out in de wet an' mebby git de misery in de back."

She smiled so kindly that Flossie and Freddie could no longer feel hurt or angry, and when, a little later, Dinah brought each of the small twins a sugar cookie, fresh from her oven, Flossie and Freddie began to smile.

"We'll play picnic with the cookies," decided Flossie. "We'll pretend the big chair is a desert island and we're shipwrecked."

"Oh, yes," agreed Freddie. "And after that we'll play hide-and-go-seek."

The rain still fell, the wind blew mournfully in the chimney, but the small Bobbsey twins, snug and warm in the house, played games. Now and then they would go to the window to look out, watching the big drops splash down and wondering what had become of Nan and Bert.

"Look how full the gutter is now!" called Flossie, after her last visit to the window.

"Oh!" exclaimed Freddie. "I guess my boat would sail fine now! Maybe, when it stops raining, we can go out and play with it."

"Maybe," murmured Flossie, and then she saw something else than the rain-flooded gutter. It was an old woman who, with her umbrella almost blown inside out by the wind, was coming across the street toward the Bobbsey house. "Oh, look!" cried Flossie excitedly. "The old lady fell in the gutter! She'll be drowned!"

It was true that the woman had slipped and fallen right where the gutter water was deepest. Flossie and Freddie watched interestedly the poor, old soul trying to get to her feet. The umbrella blew away and they had a sight of her face.

"Why!" cried Freddie in surprise. "Why, it's Aunt Sallie Pry! Oh, we've got to save her!"

CHAPTER II

AUNT SALLIE'S SECRET

FORGETTING all about what their mother had told them when she had said they must not go out in the storm, Freddie and Flossie Bobbsey rushed for the front door. The two small Bobbsey twins were much excited by seeing Aunt Sallie Pry fall into the water-filled gutter.

"Are you sure it's Aunt Sallie?" asked Flossie, as her brother tugged at the door. In his haste he had not turned the knob enough and the door was sticking.

"Yes, it's Aunt Sallie, all right!" he declared. "I saw her face plain when the umbrella blew away."

While Freddie was struggling with the door and he and Flossie were preparing to rush out, Mrs. Bobbsey, who had heard the children's shouts, came hurrying into the hall.

"What's all this? Where are you two going?" asked their mother, in surprise. "Didn't I tell you not to go out in the rain?"

"But Aunt Sallie Pry fell in the gutter!" cried Freddie.

"And maybe she'll drown!" added his sister.

"Nonsense! Aunt Sallie in the gutter? You must be dreaming!" said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"No, Mother! Truly she fell in the gutter!" gasped Flossie, who was now tugging at the doorknob to help Freddie. "She was crossing the street to come to our house and she slipped and fell in the gutter and she's there yet."

"Her umbrella blew away!" said Freddie, now very red in the face from his pulling and straining at the door. "There!" he exclaimed, as he got it open. Through the mist of rain that blew into the hall, Mrs. Bobbsey had a view of an old woman trying to get to her feet out of a gutter filled to overflowing with water.

"Why, it is Aunt Sallie!" said the twins' mother.

A moment later Freddie and Flossie were

dashing down the front walk toward the old woman who was in such great trouble. She was trying to hold to a small black bag in one hand and raise herself to her feet with the other. There was no one else in the street just then to help her, so it was well that Freddie and his sister had seen her.

"We'll help you, Aunt Sallie!" cried Freddie, as he sped through the dashing rain to the rescue.

"Wait for me!" begged Flossie, who wanted to do her share.

Though the small Bobbsey twins called the woman in the rain-filled gutter "Aunt Sallie," she really was not related to them at all. Those of you who have read other books in this series know something about Mrs. Sallie Pry.

But I am sure there are some new readers who are making the acquaintance of the children for the first time in this book, and I want to take just a minute to tell them who the twins were and something about them.

If you will read the first book, called "The Bobbsey Twins," you will learn that Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bobbsey, who lived in the

eastern city of Lakeport, on Lake Metoka, had four children. There were two sets of twins. Bert and Nan, who had dark hair and dark eyes, were the older, having been born some years before Flossie and Freddie.

The younger twins had golden hair and blue eyes, and formed a pretty contrast to the darker children. Bert and Nan had good times together before Flossie and Freddie were born, but they had much more fun when the smaller twins were old enough to play with them.

Mr. Bobbsey owned a lumberyard on the shore of the lake and there the four twins often used to go to play. They climbed about the piles of boards and, when they grew old enough, went out on the lake in a boat.

Almost as much of the family as were the children, Sam Johnson and his fat wife, Dinah, helped in looking after the twins and also after Snap, the dog, and Snoop, the cat, who shared in the fun of the four. During the spring, fall and winter the Bobbsey twins went to school in Lakeport. But during the long, summer vacations they went to various places in the country, to the seashore, to

farms now and again, often to the mountains and sometimes to visit relatives in a big city. They went camping on Blueberry Island, they journeyed on a houseboat and had wonderful times.

You heard Flossie and Freddie speak of two half-breed Indian children, Jimmie Bigfish and his sister Sunshine. These were newcomers to Lakeport and you may read more about them in the book just before this one you are now reading.

That book is called "The Bobbsey Twins and Their Schoolmates," and it was at school that Bert, Nan, Flossie and Freddie often met Jimmie Bigfish and his sister.

Bert and Nan, Flossie and Freddie, became good friends of the half Indian children and it was through this friendship of the Bobbsey twins that the two strangers were, after a time, made to feel at home in the school. From then on Jimmie and Bert were great chums, and Nan and Sunshine played much together.

Those of you who read the book "The Bobbsey Twins Keeping House" will remember Mrs. Sallie Pry. Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey

had to go away to visit a sick relative, and "Aunt Sallie," who had often done the same thing before, was called in to help Nan keep house. And then such a lot of trouble as piled up!

Mrs. and Mrs. Bobbsey had not been gone long before Sam was sent for to go down South to see his brother, who was ill. Then Sam himself was taken sick and Dinah had to go to nurse him.

This left the Bobbsey twins alone with Aunt Sallie, who was very kind, but who was very deaf. Sometimes, when Nan said she was going to shut the door, Aunt Sallie would think the girl had said she was going to roll on the floor.

But Aunt Sallie's deafness would have been all right if she had not become ill with lumbago, having such a terrible pain in her back that she had to stay in bed.

Poor Nan had her hands full then keeping house for her brothers and little sister, with deaf, old Aunt Sallie laid up in bed. But Bert helped, and so did Flossie and Freddie. Things were going nicely until there was a fire scare, and thinking the house was going

to burn, Aunt Sallie suddenly leaped out of bed. She had not had lumbago since.

The fire scare did not amount to anything, but Nan's heart was almost broken, so she said, by all the troubles that were piling up. Just when she said she couldn't stand it a moment longer, her father and mother came back and everything was all right.

Since then the Bobbsey twins had not seen much of Aunt Sallie Pry until this rainy day when Flossie and Freddie saw her slip and fall into the flooded gutter during the rain storm.

"We'll get you out! We'll save you!" cried Freddie, as he raced down the front walk, taking no heed of the rain drops splashing all over him.

"Let me help pull her out!" begged Flossie.

The small twins reached the poor old woman about the same time. She was still trying to get to her feet, having half sat, half fallen into the deep gutter.

"Oh, you're all wet!" cried Flossie, as she

took hold of one arm while Freddie made a grab for the other.

"No, I'm not in a net!" returned the deaf woman. "You must think I'm a fish!"

"I didn't say *net*—I said *wet!*" Flossie fairly shouted the words to be heard above the storm. "You're all *wet!*"

"Wet? I should say I *was!*" cried Aunt Sallie. "I'm soaked!"

"I'll help you up," said Freddie. "Lean on me."

"Did I hurt my knee?" asked Aunt Sallie. "Well, yes, I guess I did a little when I fell. But I can walk all right as soon as I get on my feet. It's good of you children to come out and help me."

"We saw you fall," Freddie stated.

"Oh, no, you'd better not take me into the front hall," objected Mrs. Pry. "I'm so sopping wet I'd spoil the carpet. Help me in the back way, my dears."

Flossie and Freddie gave up trying to talk, as the rain was making such a noise that with it and the woman's deafness, it was out of the question to make her understand.

By this time Mrs. Bobbsey, waiting only long enough to slip on a raincoat, had hurried down to the gutter where she helped the small twins get the poor, old woman to her feet. It was seen that she was not hurt and, beyond a good wetting, had suffered no harm.

"Get her umbrella, Freddie," directed Mrs. Bobbsey, as she put an arm around Mrs. Pry's waist to help support her up the walk toward the front door of the Bobbsey house.

"Oh, look, it's floating away like a boat!" cried Flossie, for that is just what the umbrella was doing.

Freddie ran after it and caught it before it had floated to the corner, however, and came back with it as his mother and Flossie were helping Mrs. Pry up the steps. Her shoes made queer squidgie-squashie sounds as she walked, for they were filled with water.

"Poor Aunt Sallie!" murmured Flossie. "Did you lose anything?"

"No, child, I didn't drop my ring," said Aunt Sallie, holding out her hand to show the gold band. The children saw that the hand still grasped the small, black bag. It

was of this bag that Flossie had been thinking.

"Oh, I'd better not go in through your front hall, Mrs. Bobbsey," said the dripping old lady when she was at the door. "I'll get the carpet wet."

"That won't matter," was the answer. "Flossie, you take Aunt Sallie's bag."

"No, No!" objected Mrs. Pry, whose hearing seemed very good just then. "I mustn't let go that bag. It has something valuable in it—a secret!" The eyes of the small Bobbsey twins opened wide at hearing this.

Mrs. Pry was led into the kitchen and Dinah was sent upstairs for some garments of Mrs. Bobbsey's which the visitor could put on while her own were drying.

"Do you think you'll have any more plumbago?" asked Flossie a little later when, warm and dry, Aunt Sallie was sitting in a rocking chair drinking hot tea.

"'Tisn't plumbago—it's *lumbago,*" corrected Freddie.

"Well, *lumbago,* then," agreed Flossie.

"Does it hurt you any more, Aunt Sallie?"

"What's that about a door, child?"

"No, I didn't say *door*—I said does your *lumbago hurt you any more?*" Flossie shouted loudly.

"Oh, bless you! No! Not since I had that fire-scare when I was helping you keep house and I jumped out of bed!" laughed Aunt Sallie.

"Still, I don't think it was wise for you to come out in all this rain," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"It wasn't raining when I started, though it looked like it and I always carry an umbrella," said Mrs. Pry. "I hope it isn't lost," she added.

"No, I put it in the rack," said Freddie.

"What's that? You stepped on a tack?" Mrs. Pry exclaimed.

She was finally made to understand that her umbrella was safe.

"Were you going anywhere in particular?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey, as Dinah brought in another cup of hot tea.

"I was coming to see you," said Aunt Sallie. "Or, rather, to see Mr. Bobbsey. I need his help."

"You need my husband's help?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey, in surprise.

"Yes. I want his advice about some land matters. I'm in trouble. It—it's very important and a great secret!" and Aunt Sallie whispered the last words as she reached out to take hold of her black bag which she had kept near her all this time. "It's a secret—about land. I want to tell Mr. Bobbsey and get his advice. Oh, listen to that rain, would you!" and she shivered a little.

"Yes, and Bert and Nan are out in it!" shouted Flossie.

"Without an umbrella or nothing!" exclaimed Freddie, as he and Flossie looked at Aunt Sallie's bag and wondered what her secret was about.

CHAPTER III

THE CABIN

EARLIER that day, before it had started to rain and before Aunt Sallie Pry fell into the gutter, Jimmie Bigfish and his sister Sunshine had slipped quietly around to the back yard of the Bobbsey twins' home. The half Indian boy and his sister had a habit of going about very quietly—making hardly any sounds. In this they were like their father, Chief Bigfish, who at one time had been what is called a "wild" Indian, though he did not take part in any wars or fighting.

Bert and Nan had been expecting Jimmie and his sister to call, for the day before the dark-skinned children had promised to come and tell Bert and Nan a "secret." So, though the older Bobbsey twins were looking for their friends, so quietly had Jimmie and Sunshine appeared that Bert was startled and Nan jumped.

"Oh!" she cried nervously. "Oh, dear!"

"Did I scare you?" asked Jimmie, laughing.

"We didn't mean to," said Sunshine, with a smile.

"No, you didn't exactly scare me," answered Nan, also smiling.

"But you came along like shadows," chuckled Bert.

"Indian heap quiet!" said Jimmie, pretending to talk as if he did not know English very well.

"I wish I could learn to walk as quietly as you do," said Bert. "I'd sneak up on some of the fellows and surprise 'em."

"Speaking of surprises," went on Nan, "what's the secret you are going to tell us, Sunshine?" and she made room for the half Indian girl to sit down beside her on the steps.

"Oh, it isn't much of a surprise," stated Sunshine. "But Jimmie and I discovered a big patch of huckleberries beyond the woods, and we thought, this being Saturday, you two would like to pick a lot so your mother or Dinah could make pies."

"Oh, sure! That would be fine!" cried Bert. "Dad's very fond of huckleberry pie, and Dinah makes 'em swell! We sure will like to get some."

"That's what I thought," said Jimmie. "I didn't want to blurt it out yesterday before all the fellows, for if I had they might skin the bushes. That's why I said I'd be over this morning. Can you and Nan come now?"

"Sure!" said Bert.

Just as Bert and his sister were starting off with the Indian boy and girl, Flossie and Freddie appeared at the back door.

"Where you going?" Freddie demanded.

"Take us with you!" begged Flossie.

"We can't," answered Bert. "It's to be a big surprise!"

"You'll see when we come home," promised Nan.

The older twins knew the tramp to the huckleberry patch beyond the woods would be long and hard for Flossie and Freddie. So, though the little boy and girl teased pleadingly to be taken along, they were not allowed to go.

Thus it was that Bert and Nan had gone

away that morning, saying nothing to their mother, Dinah nor Sam about what the secret surprise was to be. Mr. Bobbsey, of course, was at his office in the lumberyard.

"Won't mother be surprised when we come back with berries for lots of pies?" asked Nan of her brother as they trudged along.

"Sure!" he said.

"Does Dinah make good pies?" asked Jimmie Bigfish.

"You ought to taste them! Yum! Yum!" and Bert smacked his lips.

"We'll give you one after it's baked," offered Nan.

"Oh, thanks! But I didn't ask on that account!" said Jimmie quickly.

"That's all right! You'll be entitled to a pie if you show us where the huckleberries grow," said Bert.

The children tramped over the fields and through the patch of woods, on the farther side of which, the Indian boy said, the huckleberries grew thick in a half hidden place, known to few, if any, of the other lads around Lakeport.

"How'd you come to know about this place,

Jimmie?" asked Bert of his Indian chum as they walked along together, leaving the girls to come behind them.

"Oh, I saw the bushes this spring when I was out scouting around the country," Jimmie answered. "I sized up the place and I could tell that there wouldn't be many fellows who would go there, so I kept quiet about it and waited for the berries to get ripe. I was over there the other day and they were just turning."

"Were there any signs of anbody having been around the place the last time you were there?" Bert wanted to know. "Maybe the berries will all be picked."

"I don't think so," the Indian boy answered.

"Oh!" cried Nan, jumping suddenly to one side as she passed a clump of grass at the edge of the woods.

"What's the matter?" her brother asked, turning quickly to look at her.

"Oh! A snake!" gasped Nan.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Jimmie. "It's only a rabbit and he's worse scared than you are, Nan! Look! There he goes!"

It was true enough. Nan had almost stepped on a little brown bunny that was hiding in the clump of grass, and it had darted away from beneath her feet as a snake might have done.

"No use to be afraid of the snakes around here, even if you saw one," said Jimmie, as they went on after watching the rabbit run to another and safer hiding place.

"Won't they bite?" asked Nan.

"They might bite if you corner them," answered the Indian boy. "But their bite wouldn't do any harm. There are no poisonous snakes around here."

"Well, poisonous or not, I don't like 'em," declared Nan.

"I don't much, either," admitted Sunshine.

The boys laughed, as boys will, at their sisters, and then they all hurried on. In a short while they were in a little grassy dell, around the edges of which were many low bushes. It did not take long for the children to find out that the bushes were well laden with the blue huckleberries.

"Oh, what a lot!" cried Nan.

"Enough for a hundred pies!" shouted Bert.

"I guess Dinah would be a long time baking a hundred pies!" laughed Sunshine.

"Nobody has been here," said Jimmie, with a look around which told him none of the bushes had been disturbed. "We'll have this place to ourselves."

The children began filling their pails with the berries. At first the little blue balls rattled noisily on the bottoms of the tin buckets. Then, as the bottoms were covered, the berries fell more quietly.

"My pail's half full already," announced Nan, after a while.

"So's mine," said Bert.

Sunshine gave a sudden start and looked up at the sky.

"What's the matter?" asked her brother.

"Rain!" was the answer.

"Oh!" cried Nan, as the first few drops were quickly followed by more and more until there was a regular deluge. "Oh, what are we going to do?"

"Well, we can't stop it," said Bert, with a

chuckle. He didn't much mind a wetting. Neither did Jimmie nor Sunshine.

"But we'll get soaked!" cried Nan. "Isn't there a house anywhere around here that we can go to?"

Jimmie shook his head as he turned up his coat collar.

"No house," he answered.

"What about the old cabin?" asked Sunshine.

"What cabin?" asked Bert.

"Oh, that's right!" exclaimed Jimmie. "I was almost forgetting. Come on!" he cried, and he made a dash for an opening in the bushes. "We'll go to the cabin! Come on!"

Not knowing where they were going and wondering what cabin the Indian children could have in mind, Bert and Nan followed, Sunshine holding Nan's hand. They ran fast, at the same time they tried not to let the berries spill out of their pails.

Harder and harder the rain came down!

CHAPTER IV

TALES OF TREASURE

"HEY, Jimmie!" called Bert Bobbsey, as he ran along beside his Indian chum.

"What's the matter?" came the answer.

"If we don't find that cabin of yours pretty soon we'll be so soaked there won't be any need of going in," stated Bert.

"It isn't very far off now, is it, Jimmie?" asked his sister, giving her head a shake to rid her black hair of some of the rain drops.

Sunshine did not wear a hat winter or summer, nor did her brother. Though Nan and Bert went bareheaded during warm weather, they were not quite rugged enough to go without some covering in the cold weather. But none of the children now had on hats.

"No, the cabin is just beyond that clump of trees," Jimmie said, and Nan could not help feeling glad for, though she did not mind

an ordinary rain, this was a very hard storm.

A moment or two later the little party of berry-pickers reached an old log cabin which Bert did not remember to have seen before.

"Why, I didn't know this was here," he said, in surprise.

"It's been here quite a while, I guess," said Jimmie. "It's almost falling apart, but I think we can find part of the roof under which we can sit and keep out of the rain until it stops."

"This sure is funny," went on Bert as the Indian lad pushed open the door, which hung by only one hinge, and went inside. "I never knew this was here."

"You didn't know about the huckleberries, either, until Jimmie told us," said Nan, with a laugh, as she shook some of the water out of her eyes and set her pail down on a box in the cabin. "Oh, but I'm soaked!" she exclaimed.

"I'll build a fire and we can dry out," offered Jimmie, pointing to an open hearth in one of the two rooms of the cabin. "There's a lot of wood here and the roof doesn't leak as badly as I thought."

"Whose cabin is it?" asked Bert, as he looked about inside. It was a welcome shelter from the storm.

"Don't know," answered the Indian boy. He was busy gathering pieces of broken boxes and other wood to make a fire. "I found it soon after we moved here with my aunt. Sunshine and I often used to come here to have picnics."

"That was before you were so kind to us and made friends for us," said Sunshine, with a grateful look at Nan.

"It's a dandy place," said Bert. "We fellows could get up a club and camp out here after we fixed the place up a bit."

"It's pretty far from home," said Nan. "Besides, maybe whoever owns it wouldn't let you play in it."

"That's so," agreed Bert. "Well, anyhow, I'd like to know who used to live here."

Jimmie could tell nothing about this, not having lived around Lakeport as long as had Bert and Nan Bobbsey. But the Indian boy said he thought probably the old log cabin had been put up long ago by lumbermen who were cutting down the trees near by. Later,

Bert found this to be true. But for a time there was quite a mystery about the place.

The rain still came down hard and the wind blew with a whistling sound around the old shack. But it was a good shelter from the storm. Though the roof leaked in many places, there was a space in front of the hearth where it was dry and the children were soon seated on boxes in front of the blaze Jimmie had made, drying themselves and feeling rather jolly over their adventure.

The boys took off their coats and hung them near the fire to dry, while Nan and Sunshine spread out their skirts over their knees and sat as near the fire as they dared, to dry their garments.

"If we only had something to eat now," said Bert, "this would be a regular picnic."

"What's the matter with eating some of the berries?" asked Nan.

"I thought we were going to save them for Dinah to make pies," Bert stated.

"We can get plenty more berries after the storm," said Jimmie. "I'm going to eat some of mine."

Each pail was about half full, and as the

Bobbsey twins and the two Indians began eating the berries, Nan said:

"I believe others must have been in here having picnic lunches. Look, there are parts of cracker boxes scattered about."

"I don't care much about cracker *boxes!*" chuckled Bert. "What I'd like would be some *crackers!*"

Jimmie suddenly got up off the box on which he was sitting near the crackling fire and began walking about the cabin.

"What's the matter?" asked Bert.

"Oh, nothing!" answered the Indian boy. He went into the other room and a moment later came back with an unopened box of crackers which he tossed to Bert.

"Hey! Where'd you get it?" asked Nan's brother in surprise.

"Found it back there," and Jimmie nodded toward the next room. "Other picnic parties have been here, sure enough. I got to thinking that they often forget and leave things behind. So I scouted around and I found this box of crackers."

"Fine!" exclaimed Bert.

Because of the waxed paper on the crackers

they were fresh and crisp in spite of the length of time they might have been in the cabin. So, munching the crackers and eating huckleberries, the four children had a good time in the old log cabin. They were getting dry, and the fire made a grateful warmth, for, though it was summer, the storm had chilled the air.

"Listen to it pour!" exclaimed Nan, as the rain pelted down on the roof. "I wonder if we'll ever get home!"

"Oh, sure!" said Jimmie.

"The storm can't last much longer—it's too fierce," was the opinion of Sunshine. "Fierce storms are always quickly over."

When the boys had eaten and were fairly dry, they went roaming about the cabin, leaving the girls sitting near the fire.

"I wonder if there's anything else hidden here," said Bert.

"What do you mean—hidden?" asked Jimmie Bigfish.

"Treasure, maybe," suggested Bert, hardly knowing why he used that word. "This looks like the kind of log cabin the early settlers would live in when there were Indians

—I mean wild Indians," said Bert quickly, lest Jimmie and Sunshine might feel hurt.

"Yes, this is the same kind of log cabin the old Indians used to gather around to fight when white people were inside," Jimmie admitted. "I have often heard my father, Chief Bigfish, tell stories about Indian fights. He wasn't in any fights himself, because fighting between the whites and Indians was over before my father grew up. But he had heard lots of stories that he told me."

"Did his people fight the white people?" asked Nan.

"Yes," said Jimmie, "they did. But you have to remember," he was quick to add, "that in the old days many white people were very cruel and wanted to take the Indians' land. So what could my father's people do but fight?"

"Yes, I guess they had to," admitted Bert. "Some white people were just as bad as the Indians. Did your father ever find any treasure, Jimmie?"

"What kind of treasure?"

"I mean when the white people would run away if they heard the Indians were after

them and might leave gold and silver and jewelry hidden in their cabins?"

"I guess at that time there wasn't a great amount of that sort of treasure," Jimmie answered. "But my father often told me stories about some of his people finding gold."

"He did?" exclaimed Nan, as eager and excited at this as was her brother. "Tell us about it, Jimmie!"

Jimmie and Bert came back and sat down in front of the fire, and then the Indian boy told the Bobbsey twins several stories about buried treasure as he had heard them from his father, Chief Bigfish.

"Once," began the Indian lad, "my father's grandfather was on the warpath with some of his braves. There was a white settlement near the Indian village and the whites had been unfair to the Indians, killing some of the warriors and taking their land. So my father's grandfather—that would be my great-grandfather—started out on the warpath. But the whites heard they were coming and skipped out."

"I guess I'd do the same," admitted Nan, with a little shiver.

"But what about the treasure?" asked Bert, who was thinking more about that than about anything else.

"Well, the white folks, whoever they were, left most of their money and valuables buried around their cabins," Jimmie explained. "But my great-grandfather and his warriors were smart. They knew where to look for such things. I suppose the white folks, in their hurry, left plenty of signs to show where they had hidden the stuff. They didn't mean to, of course, but the Indians were smarter about such things than the settlers were. So my great-grandfather dug up a lot of treasure."

"Did he keep it?" asked Nan.

"Sure! Why not?" Jimmie wanted to know. "The white folks took the Indians' land and the Indians took the white folks' treasure to pay for it."

"I guess that was only fair," agreed Bert.

"Did you hear any more about treasure?" asked Nan.

"Sure! Lots!" Jimmie replied. Then he told another story about some relative of his great-grandfather's who, out in the far West

where gold was discovered, came upon a lonely cabin where there had been a fight between a band of Indians and some whites. Many were killed, and the Indian party seemed to have been driven off. But though some of the whites lived for a time, they, too, died, and in searching the cabin the second party of Indians found much gold.

"I wonder if there's any gold hidden around here?" asked Nan hopefully, glancing about the cabin.

"Don't believe so," Jimmie answered. "There weren't many Indian fights in this part of the country."

"Still there must have been some," insisted Bert. "And don't you think, Jimmie, that lots of times the whites might have buried treasure the Indians didn't find?"

"Oh, sure! Plenty of it."

"And maybe the whites couldn't come back to get the treasure they buried," went on Bert.

"Yes, that might have happened," admitted the Indian boy.

"Then," decided Bert, "it might be that there's treasure buried around Lakeport. I'm going to have a look some day."

"Wouldn't it be great if we found a lot of treasure!" exclaimed Nan.

"Wonderful!" agreed Sunshine.

"Well, I'm going to have a look!" said Bert again. He got up off his box as though he might be going to begin the treasure hunt at once. But what he was going to do was go to the door to see if it had stopped raining.

However, before he had crossed the room there was a sudden noise outside and Nan exclaimed:

"Hark! What was that?"

CHAPTER V

NAN'S ACCIDENT

THERE had been so much talk in the lonely cabin about Indians on the warpath and buried treasure that no one blamed Bert Bobbsey for giving a little frightened jump when Nan cried out. Even Sunshine Bigfish, half Indian that she was and so not as nervous as the Bobbseys, started a little at Nan's exclamation.

Jimmie seemed not in the least startled, for he turned to Nan and quietly asked:

"What was it?"

"I heard a noise," the girl answered in an undertone.

"There's plenty of noise," remarked Bert, with a little laugh. "This storm makes noise enough."

"It wasn't the storm," went on Nan in the same low voice. "Besides, the rain has almost stopped."

This was true, as they all found out a moment later by listening. They had been so intent on the Indian and treasure talk that, until Bert got up to look out to see if it had stopped raining, they had not noticed that the downpour had almost ceased.

"No, it wasn't the storm," said Nan again.

"What was it then?" her brother wanted to know.

"It was like somebody yelling, and a sort of stamping, pounding sound," Nan explained.

"I heard something, too," declared Sunshine.

"Well, whatever it is, it needn't bother us," stated Jimmie, with a laugh. "There's nobody around here to interfere with us. Maybe it's some of your folks come after you," he added, looking at the older Bobbsey twins.

"They wouldn't know where we were," said Bert. "We didn't tell anybody we were coming after huckleberries, and you said hardly anybody knows about this cabin, Jimmie."

"That's so," agreed the Indian boy. "Well, it's easy to find out what scared Nan, and—"

"Oh, I wasn't *scared*," Nan made haste to

say. "But I would like to know what made that noise. Besides, if it's stopped raining, and I think it has, we'd better start back home."

"We ought to get more berries," suggested Bert. "There's hardly enough left for one pie. And we promised Flossie and Freddie we'd give them a big surprise."

"I guess they'll be surprised when we get home and tell them how we got caught in the storm and had to come into this cabin," said Nan, with a laugh. "I don't believe we'd better wait to pick any more berries," she went on. "It must be getting late."

"Well, maybe. We can come another time, I guess," said Bert. "And I suppose we had better be getting back now."

Still puzzled as to what had made the noise that had startled her, if it had not frightened her, Nan looked to see her brother start toward the cabin door to look out and make sure that the rain was over. Then Nan thought she would see just how many huckleberries she and Bert had left. She started toward the place where the pails had been set down in a corner, but something happened.

Whether Nan turned too quickly, or whether she caught her foot in a hole in the old floor of the cabin, she did not know. But all at once she stumbled and fell and such a sharp pain shot through her right ankle that she cried out and sank to the floor.

"What's the matter?" shouted Bert who had turned away from the door, having made certain that the rain had almost stopped.

"Oh, look at Nan!" cried Sunshine, hurrying toward her friend.

Poor Nan lay moaning on the floor, one leg doubled under her. Jimmie and Bert quickly helped lift her up, but when Nan tried to bear part of her weight on her right foot she cried out again at the result of the accident and said:

"Oh, my ankle is sprained! I can't walk! Oh, how it hurts!"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Sunshine. "Here, lay her down on these boxes!" and the Indian girl quickly arranged those they had been sitting on before the fire in a sort of couch.

Limping on one leg, half supported by Bert and Jimmie, Nan managed to cross the room and sink down on the boxes.

"Gee, this is tough!" said Bert.

"I should say so!" agreed Jimmie. "How'd it happen, Nan?"

"I—i guess I must have twisted my ankle when I turned to look in the berry pails," was the answer. The pain was less, now that the girl was lying down. But it had brought tears to her eyes, brave as Nan was.

"Sprained ankles swell," declared Bert. "We'll have to take her shoe off."

"And bind it up, somehow," added Sunshine.

"Oh, don't touch it!" begged Nan, as her brother started to take off her shoe. "It hurts terribly!"

"I have to get it off," he muttered. "I won't hurt any more than I can help."

He was gentle, but poor Nan could not keep back moans of pain, though when her shoe was off, so that it no longer pressed on the rapidly swelling ankle, she felt better.

"If we only had something to use as bandages, it would be a good thing," Jimmie said.

"Cold water bandages are good for sprained ankles," added Sunshine.

"I have an extra handkerchief," offered

Bert, taking a clean one from his pocket. "Maybe that'll do."

"Just the thing!" decided the Indian girl, taking it from her chum. "I'll have to tear it, though."

"That won't matter. Go ahead."

With the handkerchief torn into strips, the pieces being dipped in a puddle of rain water just outside the cabin and then bound as tightly as they dared be pulled around Nan's rapidly swelling ankle, the Bobbsey girl felt much better, though she was somewhat pale, under her tan, from what she had suffered.

"It was silly of me to make a fuss," she said, as she thanked Sunshine, Bert and Jimmie for what they had done. "But I couldn't help it. The pain was terrible!"

"Of course it was," agreed Sunshine. "But it will soon be better."

"I'm afraid it won't," Bert said, thoughtfully rubbing his forehead as he looked at his sister lying on the boxes.

"What do you mean?" asked Nan.

"I mean your ankle won't get well right away—not fast enough for you to walk on it

to get home," was the answer. "Will it, Jim?"

"Guess it won't," the Indian boy answered. "But you can't always tell. Maybe it isn't sprained as bad as it feels."

"Well, it feels bad enough," said Nan, making a wry face. "But what am I going to do if I can't walk home?"

"We'll carry you!" said Jimmie quickly.

"Sure!" agreed Bert. But his heart rather sank as he thought how far it was back to the house. He knew how heavy Nan was, for more than once he had lifted her.

"Maybe I can stand on it now that it's bandaged," suggested Nan.

"Be careful," warned Sunshine, as Nan sat up.

But it needed only a gentle bearing of her weight on the injured ankle to make Nan feel sure that she could not possibly step on her foot.

"Oh, I can't! I can't!" she moaned, sinking back on the boxes.

"Don't try it!" urged Bert. "We'll carry you all right."

"Sure!" agreed Jimmie.

"If you only had some wheels, you could make a little cart of some of these boxes, and ride Nan home," suggested Sunshine.

"Well," said Jimmie with a little smile, "I found a box of crackers in this old shack, but I don't believe there are any wheels."

A hasty search showed nothing that could be used in helping to take Nan home, and the boys began to consider the best way of carrying her. Jimmie suggested that he and Bert take turns giving Nan lifts on their backs. Sunshine, who was stronger and sturdier than most girls of her age, said she would do her share.

"I think it would be better to make a chair for her," said Bert.

"A chair!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"Maybe they don't do that where you came from," went on Bert. "But when you want to make the kind of a chair I'm talking about, two people take hold of each other's wrists like this."

He grasped his left wrist with his right hand and told Jimmie to do the same with his hands.

"Now you take hold of my right wrist with your left hand and I'll do the same," went on Bert, and in a moment the living chair was thus made.

Sunshine looked on with interest.

"Pretty slick!" exclaimed Jimmie. "I never saw this before. But if your sister sits on this chair won't she fall off?"

"She'll put an arm around the neck of each of us and hold on and we'll walk along carrying her," Bert explained. "Course, we can rest and put her down on a stump or something when we get tired, and we can change hands, you know."

"Let's do it!" cried the Indian lad eagerly.

"Oh, Bert, I don't believe you can carry me that way!" protested Nan. "Let me try to walk again."

"You can't!" was Jimmie's opinion, and he was right. The least touch of the foot on the ground caused Nan such pain that she had to grit her teeth to keep from crying aloud. She sank back against Sunshine, who had her arms around the injured girl, and murmured:

"All right! I guess you'll have to carry me in the chair if I'm to get home."

"We'll get you home all right!" declared Jimmie cheerfully.

"Sure!" added Bert.

The storm was now over. The wind had gone down and the rain had stopped falling though some water still dripped from the roof of the cabin with a pattering sound on the old, dried leaves under the eaves.

"Swing around and sit up on the box," ordered Bert as he and Jimmie, having formed the chair with their hands, turned toward Nan. "We'll slip our arms under you from behind. You raise yourself up on your hands, then there won't be any weight on your sore ankle. Put your arms around our necks and hold on tight."

"I'll carry the berry pails and Nan's shoe," offered Sunshine.

"How can you carry all four pails?" Bert wanted to know.

"I'll show you!" laughed the Indian girl. She slipped out of the cabin, into the bright rays of the setting sun, and, after a brief search, picked up a stick. This she ran through the wire handles of the four pails. She then took hold of the stick in the middle,

two pails on each end balancing nicely. There were still quite a number of berries left.

"All ready! Forward, march!" called Bert, as he and Jimmie lifted Nan on the hand-chair.

Just as they started to carry her out of the cabin there came a sound of shouting and a great thudding, tramping noise, while some heavy body seemed breaking through the underbrush back of the cabin.

"There's that noise again!" cried Nan.

CHAPTER VI

THE LOAD OF HAY

THERE certainly was a noise. All of the four children in the old log cabin could hear it—a noise of shouting and trampling in the underbrush. A noise of thudding feet.

"Put me down and see what it is!" cried Nan to her brother and Jimmie. "Maybe they're coming in here after us!"

"Who is coming in?" asked Jimmie, as he and Bert moved back to the pile of boxes where Nan had been sitting.

"Indians!" exclaimed the now frightened girl.

"Indians!" exclaimed Bert. "What do you mean? There aren't any Indians around here except Jimmie and Sunshine."

"Oh, I don't know what I mean!" murmured Nan ashamed of her excitement. "I didn't know what I was saying. But go and see what that noise is."

Bert and his chum lowered Nan to the boxes. By this time Sunshine had run to the door to look out, having put down the stick of berry pails and Nan's shoe.

"Go and see what it is!" Nan begged her brother. "If it's anybody after us—"

Bert and the Indian boy did not wait for a second order. They leaped across the cabin floor and stood beside Sunshine looking out. What they saw made them laugh for joy and relief.

"What is it?" called Nan. She had never known what a blessing it was to be able to jump up and run to see what was going on until she sprained her ankle and had to depend on some one else for information. "Oh, Bert, what is it?"

"Nothing but a load of hay!" answered her brother.

"A load of hay?" cried Nan.

"Yes. A farmer is driving a load of hay out through the lots over to the road. That's what made the racket—the man yelling at the horses and the horses tramping around in the bushes."

"But what's a load of hay doing out here

in the woods?" asked Nan, for she had seen nothing of any farms around the berry patch.

Before Bert or Jimmie or Sunshine answered they watched the man guiding his team that was hauling the bulky load out toward a road that ran across the lots and through the woods. It was a road that had not been used very much.

Seeing the boys and the Indian girl standing in the doorway of the old cabin, the farmer, showing some surprise, called to his horses to "whoa" and then he asked:

"What you folks doing over there?"

"No harm," quickly answered Bert. "My sister met with an accident and we started to carry her home. Then we heard you."

"Heard me? Yes, I reckon you couldn't very well help it," said the man, with a laugh. "The horses certainly made enough noise. If I had known how bad this short-cut road was I'd never have taken it. Whoa, there!" he called to his animals, who showed restlessness. "But what's that about an accident?" he asked. "Who's hurt?"

"My sister," Bert answered. He did not

know this farmer nor did the man seem to know the Bobbsey boy or the Bigfish children.

"That's too bad! How'd she get hurt, son?"

"Sprained her ankle picking huckleberries," explained Bert.

"That's too bad. But I never knew picking berries was such hard work you could sprain an ankle over it," went on the man with the load of hay.

"Oh, it wasn't picking the berries!" Bert made haste to explain. "It happened in the cabin, where we went to get out of the rain. Is this your place? We didn't harm it any—only went in to get out of the wet."

"Bless your boots, you needn't make a fuss about it!" chuckled the farmer. "It isn't my shack, and, if it was, you'd be welcome to it. It doesn't belong to much of anybody. Woodcutters lived in it once, but that was years ago. Nobody goes in now excepting now and again stray picnic parties. Is your sister badly hurt?"

"It's just a sprained ankle," said Jimmie. "We started to carry her home in a hand-

chair when we heard the noise you made and came out to see what it was."

"Where do you live?" the man asked, as he slid down off the load of hay, after fastening the reins, and started toward the cabin. "Far from here?"

"Lakeport," replied Bert. "My sister Nan and I are two of the Bobbsey twins, and this is Jimmie Bigfish and his sister Sunshine. They're part Indian," Bert explained.

"You needn't have said that last!" chuckled the farmer. "I can see they are. Are you Mr. Richard Bobbsey's boy—him that keeps the lumberyard?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bert.

"Well, then I know about you. Leastways I know your father. I've bought lumber from him. You're strangers around here, I take it," he added, nodding to Jimmie and Sunshine.

"Yes, sir," answered the Indian boy in a low voice. "Though my aunt, Mrs. Carwith, has lived around here longer than we have."

"Oh, the Carwith family! Yes, I know about them. But where's the girl with the broken leg?"

"Not a broken leg—just a sprained ankle. But she can't walk," said Bert. "She's inside."

A moment later, Nan, who had been listening to this talk, understood what had made the noise.

"I guess it was me driving in a while back that made the other racket you heard," said Mr. Huntley, the good-natured farmer, when he had listened to the children's story. "So you can't walk?" he asked Nan.

"No, and it's beginning to hurt again, terribly!"

"Then we'd best get you home as soon as we can," said Mr. Huntley. "Now let me get hold of you, and—"

"What are you going to do?" asked Nan as he stooped over her.

"Why, I'm goin' to pick you up as gently as I can and put you on top of my load of hay!" chuckled the farmer. "You couldn't want a softer bed for a sprained ankle. Then I'll drive you home. Even if the road is rough, and I'm not saying it isn't, you won't mind, being on the hay. Now here we go!"

In a moment he had picked Nan up in his

arms and hurried out and over to the load of hay with her. Bert, glad that he and Jimmie did not have to carry Nan more than the mile back to Lakeport, was wondering how the farmer was ever going to get her up on top of the high load of hay.

But Mr. Huntley was spry and strong. In what seemed to be one motion he had stepped up on the hub of a front wheel, then to a little platform in front of the seat, and, a moment later, had lifted Nan up so that she rested on top of the pile of dried, sweet grass.

"There you are!" exclaimed the farmer. "You needn't be afraid that it's wet," he said. "That's why I drove in here to keep my hay dry under an old shed back in the woods. It doesn't do to get hay wet," he explained. "Makes it musty so the horses won't eat it. Well, now for home!"

"Oh, it's too bad to take you out of your way like this," said Nan as she stretched out on the soft, fragrant bed. Her ankle felt much better when she was lying down.

"It isn't out of my way," said Mr. Huntley "I was on my way to Lakeport to deliver this load of hay when the storm overtook me and

I swung into this short cut to get under the shelter of an old shed I knew was here. There was a portable sawmill back there at one time," and he pointed to the woods out of which he had come with his hay close to the cabin. "There was a shed that used to keep some of the lumber dry and I thought it would help me save my hay. And it did. Now if the rest of you will climb up we'll start."

It did not take Bert, Sunshine and Jimmie long to scramble up beside Nan. The berry pails were stowed on the seat beside the farmer and off the party started toward the road. The sun was now shining brightly, though it would soon set.

By turns the children told their story—how they had come berrying and had been caught in the storm, running for shelter to the lonely cabin. Then Nan's accident had happened.

Though the short cut road over the fields and through the woods was a rough one, so springlike was the load of hay that Nan felt scarcely any pain in her sprained ankle, and the farmer soon turned out on the highway

that led to Lakeport and the home of the Bobbsey twins.

"Down that street, if you please," Bert pointed out to Mr. Huntley as they entered the town. "Our house is down that street, if it isn't too much out of your way."

"Never mind about my way," replied the farmer. "My way is your way, just at present. I'm going to get this sick girl home!"

"Oh, I'm not *sick!*" Nan was quick to say. "But it's going to be terrible to be lame for a week or more."

"Maybe it will get well quickly," Sunshine put in consolingly. "I bandaged it so tightly that maybe it won't swell much."

It can easily be imagined that Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey were much surprised when a load of hay stopped in front of their house and the driver, climbing up, lifted off Nan and carried her in.

"Oh, mah good lan' of Jubilee, whut done happen now?" cried Dinah.

"Nan, are you injured?" gasped her mother.

"Just a sprained ankle," said Mr. Huntley, as he took Nan up the steps as tenderly as

her own father could have carried her. She'll be all right soon."

The story was quickly told, Flossie and Freddie listening with wide-open eyes to it all. Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey had just begun to worry over the absence of Nan and Bert when along came the load of hay. Nan's parents thanked Mr. Huntley for what he had done, then he and Sunshine and Jimmie went away, the farmer to deliver his hay and the Bigfish children to their home with their aunt, Mrs. Carwith.

"Did you bring the big surprise?" asked Freddie when Nan was undressed and tucked into bed, with fresh bandages on the foot.

"That's the big surprise—huckleberry pies," said Bert, though he realized now that it was not so great a surprise as he had counted on. "We had to eat some of the berries, we got so hungry," he added.

"We have a surprise, too!" said Flossie, dipping her hand into one of the pails. "It's a bigger surprise'n yours is, too!"

"Is it?" asked Bert, patting her golden curls "What is it?"

"Aunt Sallie Pry 'most drowned in the gutter and Freddie and I pulled her out and Aunt Sallie is in trouble and she's got a secret and daddy's going to help her find it! So there!" cried Flossie all out of breath.

"What's all this?" exclaimed Bert. "Is Aunt Sallie here?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Is she in trouble?" Bert wanted to know, for he had a kindly feeling toward the deaf old woman who had helped him and Nan keep house.

"Well, sort of trouble," replied Mr. Bobbsey, with a smile.

"Where is she?" asked Bert after Flossie and Freddie had again told their excited story of seeing Mrs. Pry fall into the flooded gutter.

As if in answer to the question the woman herself came into the room, carrying her black bag.

"I've looked all through my papers, but I can't find it," she said to Mr. Bobbsey. "I guess everything is lost!"

"Oh, no," answered the lumberman. "We

won't say that yet. We may find what we need."

Then Aunt Sallie caught sight of Bert and she was told the story of the accident in the cabin.

"Nan's ankle got hurt," said Bert.

"She bought a new skirt?" asked Aunt Sallie. "Good land, what did she want to go out in all that rain for to buy a new skirt?"

"No, not *skirt*—her leg's *hurt!*" exclaimed Bert, trying not to smile.

"Oh, her leg's hurt. Well, why didn't you say so first, Bert? You children don't talk as plain as you used to. You should speak up proper." Poor Aunt Sallie! She never thought she was getting deafer and deafer. "Well, it's a blessing I wasn't drowned in the gutter," she said, with a laugh as more of the story was told. She patted Flossie and Freddie lovingly. Bert was anxious to hear more about the secret and the trouble.

"Something's got to be done about it," went on Aunt Sallie. "Do you suppose the police could help, Mr. Bobbsey?"

At that moment the telephone bell rang and Bert offered to answer the call.

"No, son, thank you, I'd better see to it," said Mr. Bobbsey. "It may have to do with Aunt Sallie's business."

"What's the matter?" asked Bert. "Is she going to be arrested?"

"No, of course not!" said his mother, with a laugh. "I'll tell you later. Dear me, what a time you must have had!"

"Oh, it wasn't so bad after that load of hay came along," Bert answered. "But I guess if Jimmie and I had had to carry Nan on our hand-chair we wouldn't be here yet. And, say, Mother, do you know where there's any hidden treasure around here?" asked the boy eagerly.

"Hidden treasure? What do you mean?"

"Well, Jimmie Bigfish was telling how the white folks hid their gold when the Indians were on the warpath. Was there any treasure ever hidden around our house?

Before Mrs. Bobbsey could answer the voice of Nan calling from upstairs was heard.

"Mother! Mother! Please come up!" begged Nan.

CHAPTER VII

AUNT SALLIE'S STORY

"WHAT is it, Nan? Is your ankle worse?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey anxiously, as she hurried toward her daughter's room. Downstairs, with the hall door open, Bert, Flossie and Freddie, together with Mr. Bobbsey and Aunt Sallie Pry, waited to hear what Nan would say. They had all heard her call out as if in pain.

But they felt better when, in answer to her mother's question, they heard Nan say:

"No, thank you. My ankle doesn't hurt much. But I want to hear what you're talking about down there—treasure and Aunt Sallie and the police. I heard that much about it, and it isn't fair to leave me up here all alone while you're telling secrets downstairs."

"Oh, so that's why you called me!" ex-

claimed Mrs. Bobbsey, with a laugh. "That's what you want, is it?"

"Yes, Mother, please! It isn't any fun to stay up here in bed and hear only half of what's going on. Can't you come up here and talk?"

"Well, yes, I suppose we could," said Mrs. Bobbsey, as she made straight the bedclothes, for Nan had tossed about a bit after her sprained ankle had been newly bandaged. "You haven't any real sickness, and a sore foot won't be any the worse for a bit of excitement, I suppose."

"Oh, Mother! is there going to be excitement?" asked Nan, with shining eyes.

"Well, isn't hunting after buried treasure always exciting?" Mrs. Bobbsey queried with a smile. "Bert has started to talk about gold the white people hid to keep it away from the Indians."

"Oh, that's only some of his talk with Jimmie Bigfish," said Nan, with a laugh. "It's Aunt Sallie's secret I'd rather hear about, and why she wants the police. What does it all mean, Mother?"

"I haven't the least idea, child. So much

has happened since the storm started—you and Bert were missing, and Aunt Sallie falling into the gutter—that I haven't had time to talk to her about why she came here. She'd just started to tell your father something when you called."

"Oh, then if she hasn't told any of her secret I can hear it all!" exclaimed Nan, with a happy little sigh. "Do, please, bring them all up here."

"All right," agreed Mrs. Bobbsey.

So, a little later, the whole family, including Aunt Sallie Pry, were in Nan's room, the smaller twins insisting on lying on the bed beside their sister, who cuddled them close to her.

"Now, Aunt Sallie," said Mr. Bobbsey, with a nod toward the old lady, "you can tell your story."

"What's that about Mrs. Mory?" asked Aunt Sallie. "I don't know anybody of that name."

"No! I said you could tell your *story!*" said Mr. Bobbsey, speaking in a louder tone. "You said you wanted to ask my advice and—"

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Aunt Sallie, with a little laugh that made the wrinkles of her face seem to play tag with each other. "That's what I came out for, though I didn't expect to fall into the gutter," and she laughed at what had happened. "Yes, Mr. Bobbsey, I need your advice, and it's about this."

Bert and Nan, as well as Flossie and Freddie, were eager to hear Aunt Sallie's story. But if they expected that she would at once begin they were disappointed. For Mrs. Pry began fumbling in the black bag which held her spectacles, a package of strong peppermint candy, and some bundles of papers—the sort of papers the children often saw on their father's desk at the office in the lumberyard.

"Can Nan have a peppermint?" asked Aunt Sallie, taking the candy from her bag.

"I don't suppose it will make her ankle any worse," replied Mrs. Bobbsey, smiling.

"Well, there you are, my dear," and Aunt Sallie not only gave Nan one, but the other twins as well. Then, popping two of the strong candies into her own mouth, Aunt Sallie began looking over the papers she took

from her bag, sorting them out as she peered at them through her spectacles.

"Well, I guess I have things in order at last," she said. "So if you're ready I'll begin."

"You may go ahead," returned Mr. Bobbsey."

"Bread!" exclaimed the old lady, with a quick look at the twins' father. "No, I don't want a slice of bread. We're going to have supper soon, aren't we?"

"All right—go on, please," and Mr. Bobbsey spoke so plainly that Aunt Sallie heard properly this time.

But before the old lady could start her story, Dinah came lumbering up the stairs.

"'Scuse me, Mistah Bobbsey," she said, "but dat telyfoam am ringin' laik all possessed, an'—"

"Oh, I forgot all about answering it!" exclaimed the lumberman. "I was just going to when Nan called. I'll see who it is."

The children were all impatience to hear what Aunt Sallie had to say, but this could not happen until Mr. Bobbsey came back, which he soon did. For the telephone call

was only from one of his men in the lumber-yard, asking about what should be done with a load of planks that had just come in on a lake boat. Having attended to this business, Mr. Bobbsey again joined his family in Nan's room, and once more Aunt Sallie started to tell her story.

"It isn't very long," she said.

"Is it about buried treasure?" Bert could not help asking, and he took pains to speak very plainly.

"It isn't *buried* treasure," Aunt Sallie replied. "But I hope to get some money out of this matter."

"Well, money is treasure," said Bert. "It doesn't have to be buried, I guess."

"Quiet, please," said Mrs. Bobbsey, in a low voice. "Let us hear what Aunt Sallie has to say."

"It's about the old Captain Tom Lapham farm on Rolling River," began Aunt Sallie, rustling her papers. "Did you ever hear of it, Mr. Bobbsey?"

"The Lapham farm on Rolling River? Yes, I know where it is," answered the twins' father.

"Well," went on Mrs. Pry, "for a good many years that old farm wasn't thought to be worth much. Nobody raised anything on it, and it was too far out to be cut up into building lots. But here, lately, something valuable has been found on that farm.

"Gold?" exclaimed Nan.

"Indian treasure?" ejaculated Bert.

"Neither of those," and Aunt Sallie shook her head. "I don't quite know the rights of it, but as near as I can make out some kind of clay has been found on that farm that's valuable. Some kind of clay they use in making new-fangled medicine for poultices. Anyhow, there's a company of men that wants to buy up the farm for a lot of money to get this clay."

"Why don't they buy it?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"Because I won't let 'em!" Aunt Sallie fairly snapped out.

"You won't let them! Why?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Because I want a share in the money the old Lapham farm will bring! I'm part owner of that farm if I can only find the

papers to prove it. It was in part Pry property and my husband's share would come to me."

"I never heard that the Pry family had anything to do with the Lapham farm," stated Mr. Bobbsey.

"Well, they had," was Aunt Sallie's answer. "The Pry family owned a quarter interest in the Lapham place."

"I know what a quarter is," broke in Freddie. "It's twenty-five cents."

"Hush, dear," cautioned his mother. But Freddie went on:

"And I have a quarter in my bank and if you can't find money on your farm, Aunt Sallie, you may have my quarter interest."

"Bless your heart, my dear," murmured the old lady, with a smile at Freddie. "I'm not as poor as that. I only want my rights, which would be a quarter of the Lapham farm. Those who own the other three quarters can have their share."

"How can you prove that you have a quarter interest in the farm?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"Well, there's where I want your advice

and help," Mrs. Pry answered. "I have some papers here, but I'm afraid they aren't enough, or the right ones." She handed the bundle to Mr. Bobbsey. "Grandfather Sam Pry, who was my husband's father's father, had a lot of old deeds and other valuable papers that would prove my claim to one fourth of the Lapham farm. If I could only find those papers I'd be all right. That's what I came to see you about."

"I'll help you all I can," promised Mr. Bobbsey, looking over the papers Mrs. Pry handed him. "But it may not be easy unless we find the missing deeds and other documents. What do you think Grandfather Pry did with them?"

"There's no telling. He was a queer old man, always wandering off about his place which joined the Lapham farm. For all I know, he might have buried the deeds and forgotten about them."

"Buried treasure!" murmured Nan, with a look at Bert.

"Like Jimmie told us about," whispered Bert. "Only it's papers instead of gold."

"Hush, my dears," cautioned Mrs. Bobb-

sey, for she saw that Aunt Sallie had not yet finished.

"Yes," went on the old lady, "either Grandfather Pry hid these papers away, or, not knowing how valuable they would be some day, lost them, or else they were stolen."

"If anything is stolen you ought to call the police," said Flossie gravely. "There's a police dog down the street and—"

They all laughed at that, though Flossie and Freddie could not understand why.

"I guess it would take more than a police dog to find those missing papers," said Aunt Sallie, smiling at Flossie. "But do you think you can help me get my rights, Mr. Bobbsey? The men who found the medicinal clay on the Lapham farm are anxious to start work, but they can't until they clear the title and buy the place, and I'm not going to give up my claim until I get a quarter share. So I came to you. I need help and advice."

"I'll do the best I can for you," promised the twins' father. "I'll see my lawyer and go over these papers with him. But it is strange that you should come to me about the

Lapham farm on Rolling River at this time."

"Why so?" asked Aunt Sallie.

"Because," answered Mr. Bobbsey, "my wife and I have just decided to spend this summer's vacation up there."

"Spend your vacation on the Lapham farm?" exclaimed Aunt Sallie.

"Well, no, not on the Lapham place," was Mr. Bobbsey's answer. "But on Grandfather Enoch Ralston's farm, which is right next to it!"

The Bobbsey twins heard this news for the first time. They greeted the announcement with little exclamations of delight.

"Oh, we're going to a farm!" squealed Flossie.

"To the country! Hurray!" shouted Freddie.

"Are we really going to Rolling River?" asked Nan, and she was so interested that she forgot all about her sprained ankle.

"Yes, it is all arranged," Mrs. Bobbsey replied. "We were going to tell you children later, but it's just as well you should know it now."

"I didn't know we had a Grandfather Ralston," put in Bert, rather puzzled.

"He isn't your grandfather, but every one speaks of him as 'Grandfather Ralston,' and I do the same," explained Mr. Bobbsey. "He is the owner of the farm next to the Lapham place. I have had some business dealings with him. That's how it happened that I arranged to take you all up there this summer. Do you think you will like it?"

"Oh, will we!" exclaimed Nan.

"It's the best thing that could happen!" ejaculated Bert.

"I'm going to take my fire engine!" cried Freddie.

"And I'm going to take every one of my dolls!" shouted Flossie.

"Then Grandfather Ralston will have to build an addition to his house unless it's already extra big," said Nan, for Flossie had more dolls than Nan or Mrs. Bobbsey could keep count of.

"Oh, he won't, Nan Bobbsey!" exclaimed Flossie, in protest.

"Well," said Aunt Sallie, "that will fit in nicely. If you go to the Ralston farm, Mr.

Bobbsey, next to the Lapham place on which I have a claim, maybe you can do something to help me get my share of the money."

"I'll do my best," promised the twins' father.

Just then the voice of Dinah was heard calling:

"Suppah! Suppah! Everybody come to suppah, 'ceptin' Nan, an' I'll carry hers up, poor lamb!"

CHAPTER VIII

VACATION DAYS

BERT BOBBSEY was so eager and excited on Monday morning, begging that he might help his father in setting up Aunt Sallie's claim to the Lapham farm, that he did not want to go to school.

"Let me take Aunt Sallie's papers to the lawyer and see if she can get a quarter share of that medicinal clay," said the boy.

"No, you must go to school," insisted Mr. Bobbsey. "It will take time to go over these papers. A lawyer is the best one to decide whether Aunt Sallie has any sort of claim or not."

"Maybe she would have a good claim if she could find those papers her husband's Grandfather Pry lost," suggested Bert.

"Maybe," replied Mr. Bobbsey. "Anyhow, you skip along to school and we'll talk some more about this later."

Following the storm and the exciting adventures of Saturday, there had been a quiet Sunday in the Bobbsey home. Aunt Sallie had remained as a guest, since she lived away on the other side of Lakeport. Besides, her clothes were hardly dry and they needed pressing, which Dinah promised to do on Monday. So the deaf old lady stayed with the Bobbsey's over Sunday and Bert spent a good deal of time in her company, trying to find out where she thought Grandfather Pry might have put the missing papers.

"Land sakes! I couldn't tell you no more than the man in the moon!" said Aunt Sallie.

"Well, I'm going to have a look for them when we go up to the Ralston farm for our summer vacation," decided Bert.

Nan, of course, could not go to school that Monday morning. Her ankle was still very sore, though the swelling had gone down after the doctor brought some liniment to rub on it.

"But you'll have to stay in bed a week," he told Nan.

"Oh, a whole week?"

"Better that than a month," said Dr.

Pierce, with a smile. "And if you walk with a sprained ankle too soon, you may injure it so much that you will have to keep off it for a month."

"Then I'll be careful," Nan promised.

So she had to remain in bed, while Bert hurried off to school, meeting his new chum, Jimmie Bigfish, half way there. Flossie and Freddie trudged off with little friends of their own, and poor Nan was left at home alone.

Yet she was not quite deserted. Aunt Sallie sat with her a while before leaving for her own house, and Dinah came up quite often with little dainties that would tempt Nan to eat. Mrs. Bobbsey brought in some books from the library. She also worked on some embroidery she was doing for a summer dress.

"Being sick with a sprained ankle isn't the worst thing in the world," said Nan. "Though I do wish I could help you get your share in the old farm, Aunt Sallie."

"Perhaps you will—who knows?" returned Mrs. Pry, who was more of a prophet than she realized, as Nan discovered some time afterward.

"Now don't fall into any more gutters, Aunt Sallie," warned Nan, as the old lady, with her newly pressed garments, started home after lunch.

"No, I won't," was the promise. "I wouldn't have fallen in as I did, only my foot slipped."

"That's what happened to me when I sprained my ankle," said Nan. "Good-bye!"

"No, no! I shan't cry!" said Aunt Sallie. "Why do you tell me not to cry.'

"I said *good-bye!*" and Nan made noise enough to be heard properly this time.

"Oh! Good-bye! Good-bye, my dear. I'll see you again."

"Want to come huckleberrying again this afternoon?" asked Jimmie Bigfish of Bert at recess.

"I guess I'd better not. We'll wait until next Saturday," was the answer. "Nan would like to go, and maybe her ankle will be well by then."

"Next Saturday will be too late—all the berries will be gone," said Jimmie. "But I'll bring you some. My sister and I are going."

"Thanks," said Bert. "I'd come only I

want to stop at my father's office on my way home from school."

"All right," the Indian lad replied. "I'll bring you some berries."

Bert's eagerness to stop at his father's lumber office was because he wanted to ask if anything more had been heard about Aunt Sallie's claim to the Lapham farm. That was one of the reasons. Another was that Bert wanted to talk to his father about treasure hunting.

In the family talk over Sunday about the old Lapham farm it came out that it was one of the oldest settled places in that part of the country.

"There used to be lots of real, wild, savage Indians about the place, so I've heard Grandfather Pry say," declared Aunt Sallie.

"Did he ever fight the Indians?" asked Bert eagerly.

"No, but I heard him say his father did."

That settled it in Bert's mind and he was eager to ask his father some questions. So, after school was dismissed for the day and when Jimmie and Sunshine had hurried off to the huckleberry patch, Bert turned his steps

toward the lumberyard. Mr. Bobbsey was busy with a customer when Bert went in, but as soon as he could Mr. Bobbsey turned to his son and asked:

"Is everything right at home? Is Nan feeling better?"

"She was when I went home to lunch at noon," Bert answered. "But I didn't come about that."

"What then?" asked Mr. Bobbsey, with a smile.

"Buried treasure," said Bert.

"Buried treasure!" and the lumberman laughed.

"It's like this," and Bert told some of the stories he had heard from Jimmie Bigfish while they were staying in the cabin on account of the rain. "Aunt Sallie says there were once Indians around the old Lapham farm," went on Bert. "And if white folks hid their treasure away from Indians in one place, they might have done it in another."

"Do you mean you hope that some of the Pry family, who once lived on the Lapham farm, may have buried treasure to keep it away from the Indians?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"That's it!" exclaimed the boy eagerly. "Don't you think so?"

"No, Bert, honestly I don't," was the disappointing answer. "But, for all that, you may hear of buried treasure when you get up on the Ralston farm for the long vacation."

"How?" the boy inquired. "Did the Ralstons bury any gold to hide it from the Indians?"

"Not that I know of, though I wouldn't say they didn't. But what I meant was that the Ralston place is next to the Lapham farm, and Grandfather Pry's missing papers may be somewhere about the farm. Those papers would be just as good a treasure to Aunt Sallie as a store of hidden gold would be."

"I'd rather find gold than papers," said Bert. "And maybe I will, too!" he added, with shining eyes.

"Not much chance!" chuckled Mr. Bobbsey. "Don't depend too much on those Indian stories Jimmie Bigfish tells you. He means all right, but they are only wonder tales at best."

But Bert was not going to give up, and he went home with his mind still running on buried treasure which he might find hidden in some old hollow tree, a fallen log, or by digging in the earth.

Nan was glad to see her brother and wanted him to tell her all the things that had happened in school that day, which Bert was glad to do. He remembered how cut off he had seemed to be from the glorious world of outdoors when once he had had to stay in bed for a week.

True to his promise, Jimmie Bigfish appeared that evening with a large pail of fine huckleberries, and Dinah's eyes sparkled at the sight of them.

"Now yo' jes' watch me make pies!" she exclaimed. "An' dere'll be a special one fo' you, Jimmie Catfish!"

Dinah always called the Indian boy Catfish instead of Bigfish, but he didn't seem to mind. Dinah was so jolly!

In the days that followed, Bert and Nan now and then heard that Mr. Bobbsey and his lawyer were going over Aunt Sallie's

papers, trying to set up her claim to part of the Lapham farm. But one night Mr. Bobbsey came home and said:

"I'm afraid Aunt Sallie will never get any of that farm money. There are deeds and other documents missing that she needs to prove that the Pry family own a fourth interest."

"Then the poor soul will lose her share," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"It looks so—unless the missing papers can be found, and neither she nor any one else seems to know where they are."

"If Nan and I find any hidden Indian gold on the farm, we'll give that to her!" declared Bert.

"I guess that's a safe promise!" chuckled Mr. Bobbsey.

Flossie and Freddie were too young to understand or care much about missing papers and Aunt Sallie's claim to the old farm. The smaller twins thought more about getting together as many playthings as possible to take on their vacation.

For vacation days were approaching. The weather grew warmer. It was all the teachers

could do to keep their pupils' attention on lessons when the sun was shining, bees humming, and birds singing in the soft air outside.

Then came examinations—worrisome days—and at last the final session of school when "pieces" were spoken and songs were sung. Never were songs so joyously sung before.

"For there's no more school for nine weeks!" cried Nan, whose ankle was well again.

"Oh, what fun we'll have!" yelled Bert.

"And I'm going to squirt my fire engine!" shouted Freddie.

"I have a new jumping rope and I'll jump and jump!" sang Flossie.

Home hurried the children. Vacation days had come. Bert and Nan fairly burst into the house.

"Mother!" they called. "When can we go to the farm?"

CHAPTER IX

IN THE BOG

Mrs. Bobbsey was in the kitchen with Dinah, telling the fat, jolly, colored cook something about work in the house when Bert and Nan rushed in. Flossie and Freddie had remained in the yard to have fun with some of their playmates.

"What did you say, my dears?" asked the mother of Nan and Bert.

"When are we going to the farm?" repeated Nan, who was as much out of breath as was her brother.

"Oh, are you home from school so soon?" Mrs. Bobbsey asked, looking at the clock. "You're early!"

"It's the last day!" cried Nan.

"Long vacation! No more school for nine weeks!" added Bert.

"Well, I know you aren't sorry," and Mrs.

Bobbsey smiled. "I don't know just when your father plans to go to Rolling River, but it will be soon now, I expect."

"Are we going in the train?" Nan wanted to know.

"By auto. It's only about a day's travel," Mrs. Bobbsey said.

"Oh, goodie!" Bert and Nan danced about for joy.

"Let's get our things ready," proposed Bert.

"It's too soon," said his mother. "We may not go for a week."

"It will take me a week to pack up all I want," Bert answered.

"Is Aunt Sallie going with us?" Nan asked.

"No, dear," replied Mrs. Bobbsey. "She has gone out West to find some other relatives she thinks may have the missing papers that will prove she has a right to a quarter share in the old farm. Poor soul! I hope she finds them. Years ago, in fact up to a little while ago, the Lapham farm wasn't thought to be worth much, your father says. But since they've found that clay on it, the place will sell for a large sum."

"And can't Aunt Sallie have a share in the money?" asked Nan.

"Not unless she finds the papers that prove her claim. But run out and play now. Dinah and I have much to do."

"We'll get ready to go to the farm," decided Nan, humming a song as she skipped out with Bert.

If the older Bobbsey twins found it hard to arrange for the toys and other things they wanted to take to "Wide Gate," as Grandfather Ralston's farm was called, so much more did Flossie and Freddie have trouble. For the smaller twins didn't want to leave a thing behind, from Freddie's toy fire engine that, as he said proudly, "squirted real water," to all the dolls Flossie possessed.

Never did time seem to pass so slowly as the week between the closing of school for the long vacation to the day when the Bobbsey twins were to start treasure hunting. For that, as Bert said to Jimmie Bigfish, was one of the main reasons why he and Nan were going to Wide Gate. "We're going to hunt treasure," he said.

"Maybe you won't find any," remarked Jimmie.

"Well, we'll have the fun of hunting for it, anyhow. I wish you were coming to Wide Gate Farm with us, Jimmie."

"So do I."

"You're good at finding things," went on Bert. "Look how you found the huckleberry patch and the cabin where we stayed out of the rain."

"Yes, I'd like to go with you, though I don't much believe in buried treasure," Jimmie stated. "But Sunshine and I are going with my aunt for a visit to another sister of my mother's, down in Florida. So I can't go to Wide Gate."

Bert and Nan fairly counted the hours until the next Wednesday, which Mr. Bobbsey had fixed on as the time for the start of the auto trip to Branchville. Wide Gate Farm, belonging to Grandfather Ralston, and also the Lapham farm, next to it in which Aunt Sallie Pry claimed an interest, were situated just outside Branchville on Rolling River. Grandfather Ralston's farm

was called Wide Gate because of an unusually wide gate flanked by two immense oak trees which gave entrance to the lane that led up to the house from the main road.

After several days of packing and unpacking, Bert and Nan found they did not want to take quite as many of their belongings as they had at first decided on. So they laid aside many things. But each day Flossie and Freddie found new treasures they wanted to take along.

At last, when the smaller twins each had a mound of playthings that would fill three trunks, all piled up in the middle of the floor, in readiness to be taken along, Mrs. Bobbsey had to say:

"Oh, my dears, you can't take *half* of this!"

That started trouble at once, and there was quite a time before Flossie and her brother could be persuaded to take only the toys and things they were most used to playing with. Even at that, Mr. Bobbsey shook his head when he saw what they wanted to take and when he thought of how little room there was in the auto.

But at last the packing was finished.

Trunks were sent on ahead. Several valises could be carried in the car and, fastened on a rack at the rear, was a large box containing Freddie's fire engine among his other dearly beloved possessions, and a few of the many dolls Flossie owned, together with others of her belongings.

"Have you heard any more about Aunt Sallie's claim?" asked Bert of his father the night before the start.

"No, I haven't," was the answer. "The lawyer doesn't believe she has much of a chance unless she can get hold of some of those papers her grandfather hid or lost."

"And you didn't hear any more about buried Indian treasure on Wide Gate Farm, did you, Dad?" asked Bert.

"No. And I don't believe you will, either," answered Mr. Bobbsey, with a smile.

"Well, I'm going to try," was all Bert said.

Morning came at last and finally the hands of the clock pointed to the hour for the start. Dinah and Sam were to remain behind to close the Bobbsey home for the summer and then they would go to friends to stay until the family returned. Snoop, the old cat, was

to be kept by a neighbor, and though the children begged that Snap, their dog, might be taken along, Mr. Bobbsey said there was a dog at Wide Gate and it would be better to leave Snap with friends in Lakeport.

This was arranged for and then, after many good-byes had been called back and forth, and after Jimmie Bigfish and his sister Sunshine had come over to say farewell, Mr. Bobbsey started the car.

"We're off!" cried Bert, as the machine moved up the road. "Good-bye, Dinah! Good-bye, Sam!"

"Good-bye! Good-bye!"

So the treasure hunt started. Only, even Bert, as much as he thought about it, did not really know what a queer treasure hunt it was to be.

Mr. Bobbsey had never driven an auto to Branchville before, though he had been part way there more than once. So he knew the road up to a certain point and, after that, he would be in what he said was to him "new country."

"But I guess I can find my way all right," he said.

Nothing much happened during the morning, except that either Flossie or Freddie seemed to want to stop every few miles to get a drink of water. At noon they had lunch in a little town and it was after starting on again from here that Mr. Bobbsey said the roads were new to him.

It was this that caused the trouble. For, having to ask his way, he was sometimes given wrong directions with the result that when the middle of the afternoon came they were still many miles from Wide Gate Farm.

"Do you think we can make it before dark?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey a bit anxiously, as she looked at a signboard and noticed how many miles they still were from Branchville.

"I think so," answered her husband. "There's a short cut just ahead that the man back at the last place we got gasoline told me about. That will shorten the road about ten miles."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

A little later Mr. Bobbsey turned off the main highway into what seemed to be a stretch of woods.

"This is lovely," murmured Nan, as they

drove along beneath the shady trees and out of the hot sun.

"But is it the right road?" asked her mother.

"Yes, this is the short cut the man told me about," said Mr. Bobbsey. "It isn't as good a road as I should like, though."

Indeed the road was very rough and, as they drove on, became worse. It was like driving over a road such as might be used by lumbermen, and Mr. Bobbsey had to slow the car down.

"Why, it looks just like a swamp!" exclaimed Bert, after a while, pointing to some patches of water here and there on the road.

"I don't like the looks of this," said Mr. Bobbsey, shaking his head. "If I could turn around I would and we'd go on the regular road even if it is ten miles longer. But it's too narrow to turn here. I hope we shan't meet another car."

He slowed down as he reached the patches of water across the wood road. It seemed firm enough until, just as he got to the end of the wet place, there was a sudden sinking, and the back of the auto settled down.

"What's this?" asked Flossie, at once interested and excited.

"I guess we're in a bog," her father replied, as he pressed down on the accelerator and threw the gears into second.

But the road at this point was wet and soft. Deeper and deeper the rear wheels sank into the bog until, even going into first gear, it was impossible to move the car, powerful as the engine was.

"Guess we're stuck!" said Bert.

"It looks so," agreed his father.

"Shall we have to stay here all night?" Flossie wanted to know, as she looked around at the dark forest on all sides.

"Oh, no, daddy will get us out," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"I hope I can," murmured her husband, as he stopped the engine and climbed out to see just how badly the car was bogged. Bert went with him and one look at the rear wheels caused the twins' father to shake his head.

"Is it bad?" asked Bert.

"I'm afraid it is," was the answer.

CHAPTER X

WIDE GATE FARM

THIS was not the first time Bert Bobbsey had been with his father when something happened on an auto trip. Once they had a smash-up, and Bert was glad there was nothing like this now. But as he looked and saw how deep in the bog was one of the rear wheels, he began to think they might not get out without much work.

"This is too bad," said Mr. Bobbsey, as he took another look at the sunken wheel. "Everything was going so nicely until I took this short cut."

"It wasn't your fault," his wife said. "It might happen to any one. Suppose you try again to get the car out."

"I'm afraid it will only make the wheel sink in all the deeper if I spin it," was the answer. "We've got quite a load on."

"Then some of the load must get out!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey cheerfully. "Come on, children," she went on, speaking to Nan, Flossie, and Freddie, who were still in the auto. "We must help daddy."

"I'll push," offered Flossie.

"And maybe if I start my fire engine I can wash away the mud from under the wheel so we won't be stuck any more," said Freddie.

"I'm afraid it will take more than that," laughed Mr. Bobbsey. "But if you all get out of the car it may help some."

"It's muddy. Wait a moment," cried Bert, and he found some pieces of tree branches which he laid in the road at the worst puddles and, by stepping on them, his mother and the others could get off in the woodland road without getting their shoes very dirty.

Then, with this weight out of the car, Mr. Bobbsey again turned on the power. For a moment it seemed as if the machine might climb out of the bog to the more solid road. But it wasn't to be. It sank back again and, rather than speed the engine too much, and perhaps break something, Mr. Bobbsey

turned off the motor. He got down out of the car again and looked at the sunken wheel.

"We need a shovel to dig it out," he said.

"I'll go and see if I can find one," offered Bert.

"Where can you go?" his mother wanted to know. "Shovels don't grow in the woods, I'm afraid." She smiled, though she was quite a bit worried, for night was coming on and they were still far from Wide Gate Farm.

"Oh, I'll go ahead down the road a way and see if I can find where a farmer lives. He'll lend me a shovel," Bert answered. "There's no use going back, for we haven't passed a house for a long time. Come on Nan. You come with me."

"I suppose it's the best thing to do," said Mr. Bobbsey. "Go ahead, Bert. But don't go too far. If you don't see a house soon, turn back."

"No, don't get lost, whatever you do," begged his mother.

"I'll go with them!" offered Freddie. "I got lost once, and I know what to do."

"No, you stay here," decided his mother,

taking his hand to make sure he would not stray away.

Bert and Nan hurried off down the road while Mr. Bobbsey, with a long stick, tried to dig as much as possible of the mud away from the front edge of the hole, so it would be easier for the wheel to roll out. He wished he had brought a shovel with him, but he had no idea that there would be any need of it.

"It's nice here, and I like it," said Flossie, looking around at the big trees on every side. "But it would be nicer if it was a picnic and we had something to eat."

"Well, I can give you something to eat," answered her mother. "But I don't know that it will be a picnic. I brought some cookies and a bottle of milk from the restaurant where we had lunch," she said to her husband.

"Oh, then it *will* be a picnic!" exclaimed Freddie in delight. "Always when you're in the woods and have something to eat, it's a picnic. Isn't it, Flossie?"

"Always!" answered the little golden-haired girl.

Mrs. Bobbsey was glad that the smaller

twins, at least, could be made happy in this easy way. She spread out the lunch on a flat stump, and then Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey walked back a little way along the road.

"Are you worried?" Mrs. Bobbsey asked her husband.

"A little; yes," he answered. "Of course nothing much can happen. But it will make us late and maybe we can't get the car out."

"Then we can leave it, walk to the nearest place and stay all night. We can send a garage man to pull the car out in the morning," said Mrs. Bobbsey cheerfully.

"The only trouble is we don't know just how far it is to the nearest house," said Mr. Bobbsey, with a worried look up and down the road. "I wish I had never taken this short cut!"

His wife was just going to say something when they heard a call down the road. Some one was shouting and the voice was very cheerful.

"That's Bert!" exclaimed Freddie, as his father and mother turned back toward the car near which Flossie and he were having their "picnic."

"I hope he has a shovel," said Mr. Bobbsey.

Bert and Nan had not only found a house about a quarter of a mile down the road but they had brought back two shovels. One was carried by a woodchopper who, having heard the twins' story, agreed to come back with them and help dig the stalled automobile out.

"It's very kind of you," said Mr. Bobbsey to the woodchopper, who came hurrying up with Bert and Nan. "I'm sorry to give you all this trouble."

"Oh, we have to help each other out of trouble in this world," said the man, with a jolly smile. "I may need help myself some day, though I don't ever expect to own an automobile. Now let's see how much trouble you're in."

With Mr. Bobbsey using one shovel in front, and the woodchopper using the other at the back, the bog hole was soon dug out enough. Then when the engine was again started, the car ran up on a place where the roadway was hard enough to keep it from sinking in any more.

"There you are—safe and sound!" ex-

claimed the woodchopper, who was also a charcoal burner. "No harm done."

"No, I guess everything is all right," agreed Mr. Bobbsey. "We thank you very much."

"That's all right," and with a wave of his hand, putting his shovels over his shoulder and saying he would rather walk back to his place than ride in the car, the man bade farewell to the Bobbseys. The woodchopper would not take any money for what he had done, but he was glad to take a package of crackers and some of the cookies which were left over from the picnic lunch.

The short cut through the woods came to an end soon after this and once more the Bobbseys were on the main highway. It was getting dusk, but a signboard gave the information that it was only five miles to Branchville.

"We'll make it just about dark," said Mr. Bobbsey.

"And won't we have fun to-morrow playing all over the farm!" exclaimed Bert, in delight.

"It will be lovely," said Nan.

"Could I get out my fire engine and show

Grandpa Ralston to-night how it squirts real water?" asked Freddie.

"We'll see," was all Mrs. Bobbsey would promise.

"I'm going to take May Bell to sleep with me," murmured Flossie, naming one of the dolls she had brought.

On up the road and through Branchville speeded the car with the Bobbsey twins inside. Mr. Bobbsey was looking sharply for the sign that would tell him when he had arrived at Wide Gate Farm, and at last, just when it was getting almost too dark to see, he called:

"Here we are!"

"I see a big gate!" cried Bert.

"Let me see!" begged Freddie.

A wide lane turned off the main road—a lane across which was swung an unusually large, white gate. As the auto turned, this gate seemed to open of its own accord. But, looking through the twilight, the children could see a man pushing it.

"That you, Mr. Bobbsey?" a voice called.

"Yes," was the answer. "Is that you, Grandpa Ralston?"

"No, I'm Dod Pratt, his hired man," was the answer. "He sent me down to watch out for you. You're a bit late, aren't you?"

"Yes. Got stuck in the bog taking a short cut," answered Mr. Bobbsey. "But we're here all right, and I'm glad of it."

"Grandpa Ralston and his wife are up in the house waiting for you," went on Mr. Pratt. "Supper's all ready."

"Oh, goodie!" murmured Nan.

As Mr. Pratt was swinging the great, wide gate shut after the auto had passed into the private lane, there was a commotion on the ground—the sound as of some animal running fast—and Dod Pratt was heard to shout:

"Get back there now! Behave yourself! Wow! Look out! Oh!"

Then came a thudding sound and a noise of banging on wood.

What could it be? the Bobbsey twins wondered.

CHAPTER XII

DAYS OF JOY

LEANING over the side of the automobile and looking back as well as they could in the gathering twilight, Flossie and Freddie saw some animal moving about on the ground near Dod Pratt, who stood perched on one of the lower boards of the big gate.

"Oh, it's a little bear!" cried Freddie, and he was greatly delighted.

"It's a lion!" shouted Flossie.

"Lions don't grow around here!" declared Freddie. "It's a little bear, I tell you. Oh, Mr. Dod," he went on, forgetting, in his excitement, the last name of the hired man, "could we have the little bear?"

"'Tisn't a bear, youngster!" panted the hired man. "But you can have him for all of me! The pesky old critter!"

Dod seemed to be standing with one foot

on the lower board of the gate and kicking at the rushing animal with his other leg.

"If it isn't a bear, what is it?" asked Freddie, while Mrs. Bobbsey, Nan and Bert wondered what it was all about. Mr. Bobbsey had brought the auto to a stop, intending to ask the hired man to stand on the running-board and ride up to the farmhouse which was about a quarter of a mile up the lane.

"It's old Sim, and he——" began the hired man, but that was all he said for just then there was another rush on the part of the animal and again came that bumping, thudding sound of wood being hit hard.

Then Bert thought of his pocket flashlight. In a moment he had it out and had focused the bright beam of light on the man on the gate and on the rushing animal. To the surprise of all the Bobbsey twins it was seen to be a big ram with long, curved horns. It was these horns banging against the gate and fence that had made the booming sound.

"Oh, look!" cried Flossie and Freddie excitedly when they saw the ram.

"Yes, that's old Sim!" chuckled Dod, who was now so high on the gate that the ram

could not reach to butt him. "He's frisky to-night. But that light has sort of got him puzzled."

Indeed, old Sim did not seem to know what to make of the bright beam Bert was sending into his eyes. The ram snorted, pawed the ground with a foreleg, and then, with another snort, reared up on his hind legs.

"This will make him quit his fooling," said Dod Pratt. "Here, Sim!" he called and tossed something over the fence into an adjoining pasture.

In an instant the ram had leaped the fence and gone racing after whatever it was the hired man threw. Nan and the others could follow the ram's movements by means of Bert's light.

"Come on now!" called the hired man. "Let's get going before he eats it all up!"

"Eats what all up?" asked Nan.

"That lump of salt I gave him. I always carry a little with me when I get near Sim. He loves salt. It makes him as playful as a kitten."

The hired man jumped down off the gate, ran to the auto, stepping up on the running-

board near Mr. Bobbsey, clinging with one hand to the top support and saying:

"Drive on right up the lane. Grandpa Ralston is waiting for you."

"Does that ram belong around here?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey as they went on up the lane, leaving Sim behind contentedly licking at the lump of salt.

"Oh, yes'm, he lives here."

"I am afraid it will be dangerous for the younger children," went on the mother of the twins.

"Sim, dangerous? Not a bit of it!" laughed the hired man. "He's only playful."

"Do you call it playful to try to knock you down?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Oh, he wouldn't have hurt me," Mr. Pratt said. "He knows I always have salt for him, and that's why he was after me. Generally he's shut up in a pen by himself. But he must have got out. He likes to wander around, especially at night. But he won't really hurt anybody if they give him salt."

"Then I'm always going to carry salt!" decided Bert.

"So'm I," added Nan.

"Well, I'm not going out if that ram is loose," decided Flossie.

"Oh, shucks!" chuckled the hired man. "Don't let Sim spoil your fun here. I'll see that he's kept safe in his pen. He must have butted off some boards to get out. Maybe he wanted to come down and welcome you folks."

"He welcomed *you* all right!" laughed Mr. Bobbsey. "But I guess there will be no danger," he added to his wife. "Grandfather Ralston wouldn't have dangerous old rams wandering about."

"I hope not," murmured Mrs. Bobbsey. "But the children must be careful, especially the younger twins."

In a few minutes more the auto stopped near a large, white farmhouse and in the flood of light that streamed out of a side door stood an elderly man and his wife.

"Hello, Grandfather Ralston! And Grandma, too!" called Mr. Bobbsey. "Here we are!"

"All the Bobbsey twins there?" asked the jolly old farmer.

"Every one!" Mrs. Bobbsey answered. "I guess you thought we were never coming, didn't you?"

"Well, we almost gave you up after it got dark," Mrs. Ralston answered. "We feared something had happened."

"It did," Mr. Bobbsey said. "We got stuck in the bog trying to come by a short cut."

"And the old ram butted Mr. Dod," added Freddie, at which every one laughed and Freddie wondered why.

"Bless your heart!" murmured Grandma Ralston. "You must be dead tired and hungry."

"I'm hungry, but I'm not tired," said Freddie.

"So'm I hungry!" echoed Flossie.

A little later the Bobbsey family was inside the pleasant farmhouse, being made welcome, while Dod Pratt drove the auto to the garage, which was next to the barn.

"Well, I hope you'll like it here," said Grandfather Ralston as they sat down to a late supper.

"I'm sure we shall," replied Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Is there any treasure buried here?" asked Bert, after the eating had started.

"Treasure?" exclaimed Mr. Ralston. "Land sakes, no! What gave you that idea?"

"Oh, he has a chum, Jimmie Bigfish, part Indian," explained Mr. Bobbsey, "and they've been talking treasure lately. I guess Bert dreams of it."

"I'd like to find some," the boy said, with a look at Nan.

"By the way," said Mr. Bobbsey to Grandfather Ralston, "the old Lapham farm is next to yours, isn't it?"

"Yes, the next place, just across the creek. Why?"

"An old woman who sometimes helps Mrs. Bobbsey—Mrs. Sallie Pry her name is—claims that as her husband's heir she has an interest in that Lapham farm. I hear they've discovered some new kind of clay on it."

"Yes, they have, and it's likely to be worth a lot of money. I've heard that story, too, about the Prys owning part of what is called

the Lapham place. Well, I believe they did, but his heirs will have to prove it."

"That's too bad," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Aunt Sallie is counting on getting some money from her fourth share of the old farm. And she needs money in her old age."

"She used to have plumbago, too!" sang out Freddie.

"Lumbago, Freddie! Not plumbago!" said Nan in a low voice.

"It's all the same," was Freddie's answer.

The Bobbsey twins were tired enough to go to bed soon after supper, for the auto ride had been a long one. Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey remained up a bit longer to talk things over with Grandfather Ralston and his wife and then they, too, went to their room.

Bright and early next morning all four Bobbsey twins were awake and dressed, running out to look things over before breakfast. They found the Ralston farm a beautiful place, with a small river near by. Wide Gate Farm was a large one, with fields of hay and grain, orchards, several buildings besides the comfortable house, and even a patch of woods.

"That must be the Lapham farm," said Bert to Nan, pointing to a stretch of land across a creek which flowed into the larger river. "I wish we could help Aunt Sallie get her share of it."

"So do I," agreed Nan. "But, anyhow, we'll have fun here."

The Bobbsey twins did have fun. No better place for a summer vacation for children could have been dreamed of. For several days after their arrival the four ran about getting acquainted. They wandered over the fields, watched the men at work gathering crops or milking the cows, for Grandfather Ralston had a large herd and sold milk to the cheese factory near by. Often the Bobbseys went to the woods. Thus the twins passed several days of joy, being out in the open from morning until night.

One morning Bert said to Nan:

"Let's go over and have a look at Aunt Sallie's farm."

"You mean the Lapham place?"

"Yes. But it would be Aunt Sallie's if she could find those papers," said Bert. "Part of the farm would, anyhow."

"Yes," agreed Nan. "Well, let's go over and see if we can find any of that valuable clay."

As the older twins started across the field they heard a cry behind them:

"Wait for us!"

"It's Flossie and Freddie," said Nan, turning back. "Shall we take them?"

"Oh, sure," answered Bert. So they waited.

Across the field they wandered and toward a bridge that crossed the creek. As they neared it Freddie looked back. Then he shrieked:

"Here comes old Sim, the ram!'

CHAPTER XII

A TREASURE STORY

Flossie Bobbsey screamed and ran toward Nan. Nan turned around to see if the animal was really coming toward them. Bert did the same, for he thought perhaps Freddie might have been fooling.

But it was no joke!

Trotting toward them, across the same field they had just come over, was old Sim, as he had been named. The ram was making good time, as if eager to join the children.

"Oh!" wailed Flossie. "Don't let him get me!" She clung to Nan.

"He won't bother us," Bert said, though he was not so sure about this as he watched the ram.

"Don't be afraid!" said Nan to her sister.

"I'm not afraid!" boasted Freddie. "If I had my fire engine here, that squirts real water, I'd fix that old ram."

"But you haven't got your engine," said Bert.

"No," admitted Freddie, "I haven't! I wish I had!"

"Well, I guess we'd better run!" suggested Nan. "He's coming on fast, and we'd better hide! I don't want to be butted!"

"Where can we hide?" asked Bert, waving his hand toward the fields about them. "There isn't so much as a bush to get back of nor a tree to climb."

It was true enough. They were in a wide, open space between the two farms which were separated by the creek. The nearest hiding place was a patch of woods on the Lapham farm, but this was so far away that Nan felt sure, run as fast as they could, the ram would catch up to them before they were half way there.

"If we had only thought to bring some salt!" Nan exclaimed, as she caught Flossie by the hand and began hurrying with her toward the bridge.

"Oh, I have some salt!" exclaimed Bert. "I've been carrying a lump in my pocket ever since Dod told me how the ram liked it. But

maybe he won't stop to lick salt in the day time. Maybe it's only at night that salt will make him stop chasing you."

"Well, try it, anyhow," said Nan. "Go on, Bert! And let's get across the bridge. All of us! Maybe we can get under it or something!"

Even Freddie was willing to hasten on and get on the other side of the creek. Though whether that would help any remained to be seen. Bert was fumbling in his pocket for a piece of rock salt, a hard kind, almost like stone, and not the soft lumps that you may sometimes see in the bag of salt in your mother's kitchen.

"Oh, hurry!" gasped Nan, for Bert, who was struggling to get the salt out of his pocket, where it was a tight fit, was not running fast enough to suit her.

Just then old Sim gave a bleating cry and broke into a faster trot. This was too much for Bert and, taking hold of Freddie's hand, he also started to run faster.

Over the bridge ran the Bobbsey twins, their feet thudding on the planks beneath which ran the waters of the creek. On the

other side, on what was the Lapham farm. Bert saw a little hollow filled with bushes and big stones, which he had not noticed from the field on Grandfather Ralston's place.

"We can hide in there and throw rocks at Sim if the salt won't make him behave," Bert said to Nan.

He and the others were now across the bridge, but, to their surprise, the ram did not follow them. He ran up to the very edge of the planks but did not step on them, remaining on the other side, and on the farm where he belonged.

"Oh, maybe he isn't coming over!" gasped Nan in relief.

"Doesn't look so," said Bert.

"I guess he's afraid of water," suggested Flossie.

"Maybe he's afraid the bridge will cave in with him," said Freddie. "Elephants won't cross a bridge if they think they'll fall through, and maybe Sim won't."

"Oh, this bridge would hold him all right," answered Bert, with a laugh. "But maybe he's afraid to come off his own ground.

Maybe he knows this is another farm and he hasn't any right on it."

"Oh, maybe!" agreed Nan. "I hope so."

Whatever the reason, it was plain that Sim was not going to cross the bridge. He remained on the far side from the children, shaking his head and horns, and stamping his feet. But he did not cross.

"Only if he stays there until we want to go back, we can't," suggested Nan. "Maybe if you give him some salt, Bert, he'll go away."

"Maybe. But we don't have to come back this way. There is another bridge farther up, and, even if there wasn't, the creek isn't deep farther up, and we could wade across it."

"Oh, let's take off our shoes and go wading!" cried Freddie.

"Let's!" echoed Flossie, all fear of the ram having gone.

"First let's get rid of old Sim," proposed Nan. "Throw him some salt, Bert."

Bert broke off a bit from his lump by tapping it on the rail of the bridge. He tossed a small piece across to Sim, and the ram, with a bleat as if of thanks, trotted to

it and began licking it. Sheep, cows and goats love salt.

"There, I guess he'll let us alone now," said Nan.

Indeed, it seemed that this salt was all Sim wanted. For when he had eaten what Bert gave him, the ram turned about and trotted back where he came from, for which the Bobbsey twins were very glad.

"He must have broken out of his pen again," said Bert, as they wandered on. "We'll tell Dod when we get back."

"It ought to be a pretty strong pen to keep him in," suggested Nan. "He's got mighty big horns!"

However, now that the old ram was no longer in sight the Bobbsey twins proceeded to enjoy themselves. They wandered over the green fields, being now on the Lapham place.

But if the children hoped to find men digging queer clay that could be sold for money, they were disappointed. The Lapham farm seemed to be deserted. No men were at work in the fields. In fact, there seemed to be no crops planted. Though the four went

close to the farmhouse and the barns, there was no one near them.

"I guess nobody lives here," said Nan, and Bert agreed with her.

However, the Lapham place was as beautiful, in a way, as was Grandfather Ralston's, though it was much more lonesome and was not, of course, well kept. The children found berries growing wild and picked many which they ate. They climbed trees and went wading in a little brook near the creek. They played games and then sat down in the shade to cool off.

Once Freddie, in climbing a tree, got stuck in a crotch shaped like the letter Y. His cries brought Bert on the run and the little fellow was helped out, being warned not to get in such a place again.

"Because next time," said Bert, "I might not be here to help you and you couldn't get loose."

"Maybe I could cut the tree down with my knife and get loose," said Freddie.

"You'd be a long time cutting that tree down with the kind of knife you carry!" chuckled Bert.

The day was a happy one.

Nan wondered as they turned about to go home, whether they would meet the ram again. But Sim wasn't in sight when they neared the bridge over the creek. Later, when they were back at Wide Gate, the twins told Dod about the ram. The hired man said the animal had been caught and put in a new and stronger pen from which it was thought he could not get loose.

"But he'll never hurt you as long as you have salt," said the hired man.

Telling of their adventures at the supper table that evening, the children were rather surprised when Grandfather Ralston asked with a smile:

"Did you find any treasure?"

"No, sir," answered Bert. "Why, is there really any around here?"

"I shouldn't be surprised," answered the old farmer, with a twinkle in his eyes.

At first Bert and Nan thought he might be teasing them, but with a serious face Mr. Ralston went on:

"There really was some treasure buried in these parts many years ago. At least that is

the story, and it has never been dug up as far as I know. I forgot about it when you asked me last night."

"Real treasure?" Bert wanted to know. "What kind?"

"Oh, gold and silver money," replied the old man.

"Where was it buried?" asked Bert eagerly.

"Up along the creek—somewhere between my place and the old Lapham or Pry farm, whatever you want to call it."

"Oh, tell us about it please!" begged Nan.

"All right—here goes for the treasure story!" said Grandfather Ralston, as he settled himself in his easy chair.

CHAPTER XIII

DIGGING FOR GOLD

"WHAT I am going to tell you," said Grandfather Ralston, as he looked around at the eager faces of the Bobbsey twins, "did not happen to me nor to anybody I know. It is only a story that I heard, and, like many other stories, there may not be much truth in it."

"But it's about buried treasure, isn't it?" asked Bert.

"Yes, it's about buried treasure. Though where it is buried and how much of it there is I don't pretend to say."

"Did anybody ever dig for it?" Nan wanted to know.

"Bless your heart, yes, indeed! Years ago, when I was a boy, I had a go at digging for it myself."

"Did you ever find any?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"No, I never did. No one else ever did, either!" chuckled Mr. Ralston. "That's what makes me believe there isn't any buried treasure on my farm, or near it."

"There might be," said Bert in a low voice. "I'm going to search for it."

"Well, here's the story, such as it is," resumed the old farmer. "Nearly a hundred years ago there lived around here an old miser; whether on what is now my farm or on the Lapham place I can't say. But he was an old man who had a lot of money and he never would put it in a bank. He kept it in his house, to count over and over, I suppose, as misers are supposed to do.

"The years went on and the miser got richer and richer, hiding more and more gold in his cabin—for that's what he lived in—until finally, one night—"

"Oh, I know what happened!" broke in Bert, not meaning to be impolite. "The Indians came and he buried his treasure, didn't he?"

"Well, no, it didn't happen exactly that way," said the farmer. "It wasn't Indians who came to rob the miser, but some wicked white men who wanted his gold."

"Did they get it?" asked Nan, amid breathless silence.

"No. The old man, so the story goes, heard them coming and ran out, taking his gold with him. He hid in the woods. But after that he never kept his gold in his cabin. He was seen, so the story has it, digging at many places along the river and creek, and it was thought he buried his gold in a number of holes which only he knew about. Soon after that the miser died, so his gold didn't do him much good."

"Did he die before he could dig it up?" asked Bert.

"Well, that's what the story says," answered Grandfather Ralston. "And that's what started so many people to digging for gold along the creek and river. Many of the old settlers thought they could find the hidden gold. But, as far as I ever heard, nobody found so much as a dollar."

"Maybe it's buried still," said Nan.

"Maybe, my dear," admitted the old man, with a smile. "But I wouldn't waste my time digging for it. That story of the miser's gold, whether it's true or not, has caused a

great deal of trouble," he said to Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey.

"How so?" asked the father of the twins.

"Well, many a man who might have made a good farmer got the idea he could get rich suddenly by finding the hidden gold. So, instead of planting potatoes to dig and sell them, for which he surely would have gotten some money, he would wander up and down the creek and river, digging, digging, digging for hidden gold, but never finding any. It's that way with most buried treasure, I imagine."

"If you don't know where to dig," admitted Bert. "But didn't the miser leave a map or papers to show where he had hidden his gold?"

"If he did, I never saw it," was the answer. "Some families around here claim to have old maps, showing the location of the gold, but they are all fakes, I believe. No, the way to get a living off a farm is to work it, not to dig it up looking for gold."

"I guess that's right," agreed Mr. Bobbsey.

But when Bert went to bed that night his head was filled with wild ideas of seeking for

the miner's treasure. Nan, too, said, as she went to her room:

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could find a box of gold, Bert?"

"It sure would!" he agreed.

"I found ten cents in the street once," Flossie said, with a sleepy yawn. This was true and had been quite an event in her life. "Ten cents!" she murmured.

"Ten cents isn't gold!" declared Freddie.

"It's just as good," said his little sister.

"I want a big box of gold!" murmured the little fellow.

So it can be guessed that, even with Grandfather Ralston saying over and over again that there was little truth in the story of the buried gold of the miser, the Bobbsey twins were thinking a very great deal about treasure hunting—thinking too much about it, perhaps.

However when morning came, bringing with it a bright, warm summer day, filled with yellow sunshine, there was something else to think about. Dod Pratt announced that he had to go over to a far pasture to salt

a herd of sheep that Grandfather Ralston owned.

"You children can come along if you like," said the hired man kindly.

"Sure we'll go!" exclaimed Bert.

"Oh, goodie!" cried Nan.

"Will old Sim come along?" asked Flossie anxiously.

"No, that ram is safely shut in his new pen," was the answer. "And none of the sheep we are going to salt will chase you."

"Then I'll go," said Flossie.

After breakfast the Bobbsey twins started off with Dod Pratt who carried a bag of rock salt over his shoulder. On the way to the sheep pasture they passed the pen of Sim. The ram was butting his big, curved horns against the boards, but he could not break out.

"Here's something for you!" said Bert, giving the animal a lump of salt, which appeared to please Sim.

The other sheep in their pasture were just as eager for a taste of salt as Sim had been and they eagerly crowded around the hired

man as he put the dirty looking lumps in different wooden boxes scattered about the field.

"What makes 'em like salt so?" asked Flossie, noting how roughly the sheep crowded each other to get at the stuff.

"Can't tell you that," said Dod Pratt. "But it's always been that way. I've lived out West in the wilds, and bears and deer will go many miles to get a bit of salt. In some places there is salt in the ground, close to the top, and there the animals come to get it. These places are called salt-licks, and the earth is worn fairly smooth by the tongues of the animals trying to scrape off a bit of the stuff."

The sheep were gentle enough, crowding around the children and allowing themselves to be petted.

That afternoon the Bobbsey twins went on a picnic in the woods, their mother going with them. They took along a lunch which, as you know, tasted much better than if it had been eaten in the house.

While wandering about they came upon the ruins of an old log cabin near the creek, and

not far from the woodland road that led to Wide Gate Farm.

"Oh, maybe that's where the old miser lived!" exclaimed Nan.

"Maybe!" agreed Bert. "I'm going to have a look around."

But his search, aided as it was by his two sisters and Freddie, brought to light no gold, nor any clews to a hidden treasure.

It was the next morning after breakfast that Freddie Bobbsey, coming on tiptoe up on the side porch where Flossie was playing with some of her dolls, said in a whisper:

"Want to come?"

"Come where?" asked Flossie.

"On a treasure hunt. I'm going to dig for gold!"

"Dig for gold!" exclaimed Flossie.

"Don't make so much noise!" cautioned Freddie. He had a small pail and shovel, some playthings he had been given once on a trip to the seashore, and he had brought them with him to Wide Gate Farm. "We don't want Bert and Nan to know about it, for maybe they wouldn't let us go to dig for gold. But come on."

"All right," agreed Flossie, after thinking about it a moment. "I'll come with you soon as I get Lucy to sleep," and she began to rock a ragged doll in her arms and sing softly to it.

"It won't take long to make *her* go to sleep," said Freddie. "All you have to do is to put her on her back and her eyes will shut."

This is what Flossie did, and, as soon as she had covered her doll with a ragged quilt, she was ready to go with her brother.

"You'd better get a pail and shovel too, and dig some gold for yourself," suggested Freddie. "We'll both get some."

"All right," agreed Flossie. "But where are you going to dig for it, Freddie?"

"Oh, up along the creek where the old miser buried it," was the answer. "Come on!"

When Flossie had managed to find a small rusty pail and a large iron spoon that some one had thrown away, she and Freddie set off to dig for gold.

CHAPTER XIV

THE "EARTHQUAKE"

"WHAT are you going to do with your gold, Freddie?" asked Flossie of her brother, as they trudged along over the fields toward the creek.

"What gold?" Freddie asked. Just then he was trying to catch a large, red butterfly that was fluttering ahead of him.

"Why, the gold you're going to dig!" exclaimed Flossie crossly.

"Oh!" Freddie paused to consider. He was glad of a chance to stop and rest, for running after the butterfly had made him breathless. "Well, I'm going to buy a new rubber hose for my fire engine. That's one thing," went on the little boy. "Then I guess I'll give the rest of my gold to mother. What you going to buy, Flossie?"

"I'm going to get a new dress for my doll

Annette, 'cause the one she has is terribly ragged. Then I guess I'll get a new hat and a new carriage for her, and maybe a cradle to rock her in and a blue parasol. Then I'll buy paints in tubes like Nan's and some more jackstones and—"

"You can't buy all those things!" interrupted Freddie.

"Yes I can," insisted Flossie. "I'm going to dig lots of gold," and she banged the rusty spoon, which she was going to use as a shovel, on the rusty tin pail.

"Well," said Freddie, as he and his sister crossed a little brook, "if you buy all those things for yourself you won't have any gold left for mother."

"Won't I?" asked Flossie.

"No."

"Well, then I won't buy the blue parasol," she decided. "I have an old red one Annette can use. But where is the gold we're going to dig, Freddie?"

"Oh, I guess it isn't far now," answered the little boy. "Grandfather Ralston said the miser buried it up along the creek and the creek is just over there."

Freddie pointed to where the water of the creek could be seen sparkling in the sun. Flossie's eyes began to sparkle too. For, though she was only a little girl and did not know much about buried treasure of gold, she was old enough to know that gold was money and that with money you can buy many playthings.

"Oh, I'm so glad we came, aren't you, Freddie?" asked his sister, as they hurried along.

"I sure am!" was the answer. "We'll surprise Nan and Bert when we come home with our pails full of gold, won't we?"

"Yes," Flossie replied. "They'll wish they had come."

"We didn't ask them."

"Oh, that's so!" and Flossie stopped short. "Maybe we ought to go back and get Nan and Bert," she went on. "They'll want some gold, too. They take us when they go places and we ought to take them with us."

Freddie shook his head very decidedly.

"No," he said, and he didn't intend to be mean. "If we had asked Bert or Nan to come treasure hunting, maybe they wouldn't have let us come."

"Why?" Flossie wanted to know.

"Maybe they'd say it was dangerous."

"Is it dangerous?" and the little girl looked over toward the creek and then back over the way they had come. "What danger, Freddie?"

"Treasure hunting is always dangerous. I heard Jimmie Bigfish say so," was the answer.

"Oh, you mean Indians?" and Flossie's eyes grew big with wonder.

"No, not Indians. But there are dangers," and Freddie stood up straight as if ready to meet them. "You can't tell girls about dangers," he went on, "'cause they'll scream. Danny Rugg said so. I heard him say so to Nan one day."

"Tell me. I won't scream—cross my heart!" and Flossie dropped her spoon and pail to perform this act. "What dangers are there, Freddie?"

"I'll tell you when we get to them," was all he would promise.

With this Flossie had to be content. The truth of it was that Freddie was "talking to hear himself talk." He didn't really know of

any dangers, but he hoped they would meet with some.

"Maybe," said Flossie, "if there are dangers, we ought to have brought Nan and Bert with us."

"No! I'll fix the dangers myself," declared Freddie.

"But maybe Bert and Nan would like some gold to buy things," suggested Flossie.

"We'll give them some of ours," generously offered the little boy. "Or, if we find a lot, we can bring them to the place and let them dig it for themselves."

"That will be nice," agreed Flossie.

They were nearer the creek now and could hear the murmur of the water. A little later the two young treasure hunters stood on the bank of the stream.

Freddie set down his pail and shovel and looked along the edge of the water. In some places the banks sloped gently down to the edge of the creek, being covered with grass and wild flowers. In other places the banks were steep, and were of red dirt where they had been washed away by the swirling eddy.

"It's too bad we didn't bring poles and lines," said Flossie, as she sat down in the grass to rest, for she was a little tired.

"Poles and lines—what for?" Freddie asked.

"So we could catch some fish if we don't get any gold."

"Yes, that would be fun—to catch fish," agreed Freddie. "But we'll get some gold—you'll see!" he promised.

"Where you going to dig first?" Flossie wanted to know.

Her brother looked up and down the stream. A little distance from where the children stood was a clump of small willow trees. Pointing to them Freddie said:

"We'll dig up there. Misers always bury their gold under trees, or near trees."

"What for?" asked Flossie, as she picked up her pail and spoon and hurried after her brother. "What makes 'em bury gold under trees?"

"So they'll remember where it is," said Freddie. "You know our dog Snap always buries his bones near some weeds or the fence or something he can see, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he does," agreed Flossie.

"That's so he can see to remember," went on Freddie. "It's the same way with a miser. If he buried his gold any old place, without something to remember it by, he'd never find it."

"That's so," admitted the little girl. "All right, we'll go up there and dig."

They hurried to the clump of trees and began their treasure hunt. Now under the trees grew much grass, and if you have ever tried to dig in a grassy place, even with a sharp spade, you know what hard work it is. The sod and roots of the grass make the ground so tough that it almost takes an axe to cut through it.

So Flossie and Freddie, with only a seashore shovel and an old spoon to dig with, did not get along very fast. Freddie did better than his sister, for the edge of his shovel was sharp.

But at last the two managed to make small holes through the sod and once they were down to the brown earth the work was easier. They scooped out little mounds of it, piling it on one side and as the holes they made

grew deeper four blue eyes peered eagerly down for a sight of gleaming gold.

"Oh! Oh!" suddenly cried Flossie. "Look what I've found!"

"Have you found gold?" called Freddie, dropping his shovel.

"No, it's only an angleworm," said Flossie. "But such a big one! Look, Freddie!" She picked up the wiggling, dangling fellow, holding it up for her brother to see. But Freddie grunted with disappointment and said:

"Say, we didn't come here to dig for worms! We're after gold!"

"I know," said Flossie, laying the worm on her heap of dirt so it could burrow in and make itself a new home. "But if we don't find any gold and want to go fishing, we'll need some worms."

"We haven't a pole or a line or a hook," objected Freddie.

"That's so," assented his sister. "I guess we better just dig for gold."

But if a miser had ever buried his gold on that part of the creek shore, Flossie and Freddie did not find it. Perhaps they did not dig deep enough, for they could not get down

very far with the small tools they had. Besides, the ground was hard.

"I guess there isn't any here," said Freddie, after a while. He gave a sigh of disappointment. "We'll dig somewhere else," he went on. "Where it's softer," he added.

"If we could find a place with sand it would be easy to dig," suggested Flossie.

"That's right," her brother admitted. "We'll look for a place like that. The miser was an old man, so Grandfather Ralston said. He would want an easy place to dig to hide his gold, I guess. Come on!"

By searching up and down the creek bank, the two young treasure hunters at last came to soft sand, and here the digging was much easier. They made fairly deep holes here and after several minutes Freddie suddenly gave a yell that startled his sister.

"What's the matter?" she cried.

"I've found gold! Look!" shouted the little boy.

Dropping her spoon, Flossie sprang to his side. There down in the hole Freddie had made was something bright yellow. It was only partly uncovered.

"Dig deeper!" cried Flossie.

Freddie's shovel made the dirt fly and a moment later he had dug out the yellow object. He held it up.

But such a disappointment!

It was only a piece of brass—part of a box, it seemed. Perhaps some fisherman had broken his bait box and had tossed the pieces away. The wind and rain had piled dirt over the brass and it had been hidden until Freddie dug it up.

"Too bad!" said Flossie, as her brother tossed the piece of brass box into the creek.

"Yes, too bad," agreed Freddie. "We'll try another place."

This time the children went to a shelving bank of the creek, sloping down to the water. It was of sand and the digging was easy there. In a short time the twins had made holes so deep they could stand in them, throwing the sand out in two heaps near by.

"I guess we'll find the gold now," said Freddie, as he worked fast.

"It looks like a gold mine here," agreed Flossie.

Deeper and deeper they dug into the bank

of sand close to the edge of the water. After a while there seemed to be a shiver to the ground. Flossie looked up in alarm. So did her brother.

"Oh, what is it?" she cried, as she felt the ground trembling beneath her feet. She began to scramble to get out of the hole. But it was too late.

Flossie felt herself sinking down. So did Freddie.

"What is it?" called the little girl.

"Oh, I guess it's an earthquake!" shouted Freddie. "Yes, that's what it is! We're in an earthquake!"

He and his sister began sliding with a pile of earth down toward the water of the creek.

CHAPTER XV

DOD PRATT'S CLEW

BERT BOBBSEY had long wished for a bow and some arrows such as the Indians used to make. He and Jimmie Bigfish had made some, but even Jimmie, with all his knowledge of Indians, had never been able to make a bow large enough and strong enough to suit Bert.

So when he had come to Wide Gate Farm to spend his vacation and, in talking with Dod Pratt, learned that Mr. Pratt had once lived near Indians and knew how to make bows and arrows, Bert was very much excited about it.

"Will you show me how to make a bow?" he begged.

"Sure," agreed Dod Pratt. "But the right kind of wood is only to be got quite a way from here. Soon as I get off I'll take you over and we'll look around."

Bert had often reminded Dod of this promise, and on the day when Flossie and Freddie started on their treasure hunt Mr. Pratt said:

"Well, Bert, my boy, I have some time off now, and, if you like, I'll go over to the wood lot with you and see if we can pick out something good from which to make your bows and arrows."

"Oh, that will be dandy!" exclaimed the Bobbsey boy. "Can Nan come?" he asked, for the two were almost as good chums as two boys might have been.

"Sure!" answered the hired man. "Does she want bows and arrows, too?"

"I don't know that she does," said Bert. "But she'd like to go along."

He hunted up his sister to tell her the good time in prospect. Nan was helping Grandma Ralston make a cake and had just finished putting it in the oven when Bert came rushing into the kitchen.

"Come on!" he called.

"Where?" Nan wanted to know, and Bert began to laugh. "What you laughing at?" she demanded.

"You have a lot of flour on your nose," her brother chuckled.

"Oh! Well, it isn't very polite of you to giggle at me," and Nan seemed to have her feelings hurt, as she wiped the flour off her nose. "What are you so excited about, anyhow?" she went on.

"Dod is going to take me to the woods and show me how to pick out stuff to make a bow and some arrows with," Bert answered. The children had come to call the hired man Dod, as every one else did around Wide Gate Farm. "Want to come, Nan?"

"I'd love to," she answered. "But, my cake—"

"Oh, run along, child," said Grandma Ralston, with a smile. "I'll take the cake out of the oven. You've done the hardest part. I'm sure it will turn out well!"

"I hope so!" murmured Nan.

She hurried for her hat so as to be ready to go with her brother and the hired man, and soon the three were prepared to start.

"Where are Flossie and Freddie?" Nan asked as they went down the garden to reach

the fields across which lay the patch of woods where were many tall trees.

"I don't know," answered Bert. "Did you want them to come?"

"Why not?" asked Nan. "They'll feel bad if we leave them behind, and they'll be good."

"Oh, all right—I don't mind," said Bert good-naturedly. "Only I don't know where they are. I haven't seen 'em since right after breakfast."

"Flossie! Freddie!" called Nan aloud, after a look around which did not show the smaller twins. "Want to come with us?"

This, usually, would have brought a joyous answer from the youngsters, but as they were, by this time, far away on their treasure hunt, there was no reply.

"Are you looking for the other twins?" asked Clara, the maid who helped Grandma Ralston with the housework.

"Have you seen them?" Nan inquired.

"They went off that way right after breakfast," was the answer, and Clara pointed toward the creek. "They had pails and shovels with them—at least Flossie had a big spoon she called her shovel."

"Oh, then they must have gone to dig in the sand near the eddy," said Bert, naming a place where there was a bend in the creek and where there was a sort of bathing beach.

"We can pick them up there," suggested Dod Pratt. "It's on our way."

"Let's do it, then," said Bert, and he and his sister started off with the hired man. On the way they talked about the story Grandpa Ralston had told concerning the miser who was supposed to have buried his gold.

"Do you believe it happened?" Burt asked Dod Pratt.

"Well, it might have," was the cautious answer. "I've known stranger things than that."

"You mean about buried treasure?" asked Bert quickly.

"Well, yes."

"Did you ever hear of any gold being buried around here?" the Bobbsey boy wanted to know, his eyes shining eagerly. Nan, too, seemed excited as she waited for Mr. Pratt's answer.

"I don't know's I ever heard of any gold being buried around here," said the hired man

slowly. "But I heard about some diamonds."

"I thought diamonds grew, or were found in Africa," said Nan.

"Oh, I don't mean a regular diamond mine," went on Dod. "This was some diamond jewelry a poor woman lost or hid on either Wide Gate Farm or on the Lapham place next to it."

"But if she was a poor woman, how would she have diamonds?" asked Bert.

"I didn't mean poor in that way," explained Dod. "I called her 'poor woman' because she was sick—sort of out of her mind. She lived around here quite a few years ago, so I heard. She had lots of diamonds. Once she put them all on and wandered away before her nurse or the doctor could stop her. When she came back she didn't have a single diamond on."

"What became of them?" asked Nan, eagerly.

"That's what nobody ever knew, and the poor lady couldn't tell because she was out of her head and died soon after."

"Maybe she lost them," suggested Bert.

"It's possible," agreed the hired man. "Or somebody might have robbed her or she might have tossed her diamonds away. Folks out of their head through sickness do queer things. But I've got my own idea."

"What about?" asked Bert.

"About what happened to the diamonds. I've got a clew, I have."

Bert and Nan had read enough stories to know that a clew meant something that would lead a person to find some object that was lost or hidden.

"What do you think happened to the lady's diamonds," asked Nan.

"I think she hid 'em in a hollow tree," said the hired man.

"A hollow tree! What makes you think that?" Bert wanted to know.

"I've read lots of stories about queer people hiding jewels," went on Dod Pratt, "especially ladies with diamonds. 'Most all of 'em put their things in hollow trees. Now there's lots of hollow trees around here—for instance, there's one over there," and he pointed to an old willow not far from the creek.

"Are the diamonds in there?" fairly shouted Bert, making ready to dash toward the tree.

"No, not in there," and Mr. Pratt smiled. "I had a look myself. But there's lots of other hollow trees; plenty of 'em around here. You mark my words, children," he said, quite solemnly, "those missing diamonds that the poor sick lady hid away will be found stuffed in some hollow tree."

"I wish we could find them!" exclaimed Nan, with shining eyes. "A lot of diamonds would be as good as Indian gold," and she looked at Bert.

"Sure, just as good," he agreed.

Bert looked longingly back at the hollow tree, but if, as Dod said, he had dug in it and found no missing jewels, there was no use wasting time on it. So the three kept on over the field, along the creek, and toward the grove where wood for bows and arrows might be found.

"There are lots of other hollow trees," decided Bert. "I'm going to have a look in some of them before I go away from Wide Gate Farm."

Presently, as the older Bobbsey twins walked along with the hired man, they heard the voices of children screaming. In an instant Nan knew what it was.

"Flossie and Freddie!" she cried. "They're in trouble!"

At that instant Bert caught sight of part of the bank of the creek sliding down into the water, and in the midst of the dirt were the figures of Flossie and Freddie, being carried along in a land slide.

"We've got to save them!" shouted Bert, as he dashed forward, followed by the hired man and Nan.

Meanwhile Flossie and Freddie, who had dug away so much of the creek bank in their search for hidden gold that it caved in with them, were floundering in the water. Above Flossie's screams could be heard Freddie's voice shouting:

"We're in an earthquake! We're in an earthquake!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE HOLLOW TREE

INTO the water leaped Dod Pratt. Bert was close behind him. Nan could not run so fast as the hired man or her brother, so she reached the edge of the bank just in time to see Flossie and Freddie rescued.

Bert caught hold of his little brother when Freddie was floundering in the creek and being carried by the current toward deeper water. For, luckily, where the small twins had tumbled in when they dug their holes in their search for buried gold, the creek was shallow.

"You're all right now, Flossie!" said Mr. Pratt, who had caught the little girl just before Bert had caught Freddie. "You're not hurt a bit."

Flossie was crying and choking at the same time, which is a most unpleasant thing to do.

She was choking because she had swallowed some water. She was crying because she was frightened.

Both Flossie and Freddie could swim. Living so near Lake Metoka as they did when at home in Lakeport, their father had taught them how to take care of themselves when in the water. And they could have swum to safety now, it is likely, except that the suddenness of their fall caused the twins to lose their nerve for a moment. But Freddie was striking out and Flossie would have done so a moment later when the rescuers came.

At length Flossie got her breath, Freddie ceased to shout, and the two dripping children were carried to shore, and the water was allowed to drip off them.

"What in the world were you two doing?" asked Bert, when he had made sure neither of them was harmed beyond a wetting and the fright. "Were you fishing?"

"Where are your poles?" asked Nan, who was drying Flossie's face with a handkerchief.

"We—we weren't fishing," said Flossie, with a sigh of relief.

"We were digging for treasure," announced Freddie, and Bert laughed.

"Everybody is thinking of treasure," he said. "But why were you digging in the creek?"

"We weren't digging in the creek," said Flossie. "We were up there on the bank," and she pointed. "We dug in lots of places, and once I found an angleworm and once Freddie found some brass we thought was gold. Then we went up there and dug deep holes and the earthquake came and we fell into the water."

"Earthquake!" exclaimed Nan.

"That's what Freddie said it was," answered Flossie.

"It felt like one," said the little boy.

The hired man had gone up to the top of the high bank to see the place where the children had been treasure hunting.

"It wasn't an earthquake," said Dod Pratt. "You dug too near the edge of the bank and it caved in with you so you fell into the water."

"Well, it was like an earthquake all right," declared Freddie.

"It's good you heard us yelling and came to get us," said Flossie. "You got here from the house awfully quick," she added.

"My goodness!" laughed Nan, "did you think we started out from the Wide Gate farmhouse and ran here from the time you began to yell?"

"Didn't you?" Flossie wanted to know.

Nan shook her head.

"We came to get wood so Bert could make a bow and some arrows," she explained. "We looked for you, but couldn't find you. Clara said she saw you start over this way, so we came."

"And we got here just in time!" exclaimed Bert.

"That's right," chimed in Mr. Pratt. "Though from the way Freddie was striking out I guess he could have swum to shore," he added.

"So could I," declared Flossie.

"The water got in my eyes and up my nose at first," Freddie said. "But I'm all right now. Did you see any gold up there when you looked?" he wanted to know of Dod,

whom he had seen up on the bank where the digging had taken place.

"No gold, little man, no," was the answer. "I don't believe you'll find any gold around here."

"Grandpa Ralston said there was," stated Flossie.

"He said he had heard about buried treasure, that was all," remarked Bert. "There's nothing sure about it."

He did not say anything about Dod Pratt's diamond clew for fear the smaller twins might get into more trouble going off on another search.

"Well, anyhow, we can dig worms," said Flossie.

"Yes, worms are safe and sure," agreed Nan, laughing.

"Do you think we ought to take them home so they can get dried out?" asked Bert of Nan, nodding toward the still dripping twins. Nan knew of what Bert was thinking—that he would have to lose the chance of going to the woods with the hired man.

"Oh, I don't believe we need do that," she

said. "The sun is so hot they'll soon dry with their clothes on. I'll stay here with them and you and Dod can go to the woods," she added.

"Maybe that would be best," said Bert.

"Come along then," invited the hired man.

Flossie and Freddie did not tease to go with their brother. Perhaps they felt that enough had happened that day. Besides, after he was dried out, Freddie had an idea that he would go up where he and Flossie had dug and look around.

"Maybe there's a little gold," thought the small boy. "We went pretty deep before the earthquake came."

Ever after that Freddie called the little landslide an "earthquake," and he felt quite proud of having been in one.

So while Nan remained with her small brother and sister to see that they got into no more trouble, Bert and the hired man went to the woods. There Bert cut some hickory and other kinds of branches that the farm-hand said would be just right for bows and arrows.

Flossie and Freddie gave their sister no

trouble. They went up to where they had made the holes, but Nan kept tight hold of their hands and would not let them go close to the crumbling bank.

If Freddie expected to find any gold, he was disappointed. He did, however, recover his pail and shovel. Flossie's was lost, either in the creek or buried under the sand. But it was an old outfit.

The warm sun and the gentle wind soon dried the wet garments of the small Bobbsey twins and by the time Bert and Dod returned from the woods Flossie and Freddie were as well off as if they had never fallen into the creek.

"'Ceptin' my knickers, they're wrinkled a little," Flossie said.

"And my nose feels funny," stated Freddie, for he had bumped it in his fall.

"Well, we'd better be getting home, I guess," said Nan, after a while. "Mother may be wondering where you two are," and she nodded at Flossie and Freddie. "Did you tell her where you were going?"

Freddie shook his head.

"We thought maybe she wouldn't want us

to go digging for treasure unless you came," he said to Nan.

"I don't believe she would. And you mustn't wander off alone like this again. Something worse might happen. If we hadn't come you might have been carried away off down the creek."

There was excitement in the farmhouse, you may be sure, when the wanderers returned and their story had been told.

It was two or three days after this, days during which the Bobbsey twins had had many good times at Wide Gate Farm, that Bert found Nan one morning sitting on the side porch reading a book.

"Want to come with me?" asked Bert, in a low voice.

"Where?" asked Nan, laying aside her book.

"Off to look for a hollow tree," answered her brother, still in quiet tones.

"Why are you whispering?" Nan wanted to know.

"So Flossie and Freddie won't hear me. They're around the corner playing store," Bert said. "I'll take 'em some other time.

But if you want to come now I'll wait for you."

"Oh, I'm all ready," announced Nan, lowering her voice. For, though the older twins loved the younger ones, sometimes it could not be denied that Flossie and Freddie were a bit troublesome. "But what is this about a hollow tree?" Nan demanded.

"Don't you remember what Dod said?" asked Bert, as Nan followed him down off the porch. "That the sick lady hid her diamonds in a hollow tree?"

"Oh, I remember that," agreed Nan. "But how did you find out which hollow tree it was? Dod said he'd looked in lots of them and had never found anything. How can you tell?"

"I can't, for sure," Bert admitted. "But yesterday when I was coming through the woods I went off the path a little way and I found a big hollow tree that I'm sure nobody ever looked in before—not even Dod. Maybe the diamonds are there."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if they were!" exclaimed Nan, her eyes shining with excitement.

"We'll soon find out," declared Bert.

"Is it far from here?" asked Nan, as she and her brother managed to get beyond the barn without being spied by Flossie or Freddie.

"Not very. It's just over that hill," and Bert pointed to a distant one surrounded by trees.

They hurried on and were soon in the woods, where it was dark and quiet beneath the evergreens.

"Which tree is it?" asked Nan, after Bert had led the way deeper and deeper into the woods. "There are so many hollow ones. Did Dod tell you which one might have diamonds in it?"

"How could he, when he doesn't know himself?" asked Bert. "You have to try a lot of hollow trees before you strike the right one. There it is, over there!" and he pointed to a large oak which had a hollow on one side. The tree had died and was rotting away.

"Oh, is that the diamond treasure tree?" asked Nan, in a low voice.

"I hope so," and Bert's voice was also very quiet.

CHAPTER XVII

BERT'S TUMBLE

TOGETHER, walking carefully and keeping very quiet, Nan and Bert Bobbsey approached the hollow tree. They looked around, but saw no one. Not that it would have mattered, for they had a right to do what they were going to do. But, somehow, Bert and Nan did not want any one to see them search for diamonds. Truth to tell, they were not very sure they could find any.

"Is this Grandpa Ralston's land?" asked Nan, as they drew near the gnarled, old tree which seemed almost ready to topple over, so large was the hollow in its trunk.

"No, this is part of the Lapham farm—or what Aunt Sallie calls the Pry farm," Bert answered.

"Do you think she'll ever get her share of it?" Nan went on.

"It's hard to say," was the answer. "I haven't heard dad and mother talk much about it lately."

"If we found a lot of diamonds we could give her some," Nan said generously.

"Oh, sure!" agreed Bert.

"I don't think we'll find any," went on his sister. "I don't think Dod was telling you the truth about the poor lady who lost her jewels or hid them."

"Dod always tells the truth!" declared Bert. "Of course, he wasn't sure, himself, that there ever were any diamonds. He just heard the story and he told us what he heard. There was a queer, sick lady up around here once. Grandpa Ralston remembers that. But he says he doesn't take any stock in her hiding or losing diamonds."

"It *would* be wonderful if we could find them," murmured Nan, willing, if not quite able, to believe the story.

By this time she and Bert were close to the tree. It was in rather a lonesome place, on top of a small hill which sloped down to the creek, about a quarter of a mile away from the Wide Gate farmhouse.

"You don't suppose that if anybody saw us here they would drive us off, do you?" asked Nan, as Bert stepped forward to look into the dark, rotted interior of the old oak tree.

"I don't believe so," he replied. "There isn't anybody on the Lapham farm now. The last Mr. Lapham moved away when he grew too old to work the land, which wasn't good, anyway, so Dod said. Then they found this clay and that made the place more valuable. So maybe the Laphams will get more money that way than they would by raising corn, potatoes and oats."

"But if the Laphams get it all, there won't be any left for Aunt Sallie—I mean any money!" said Nan.

"Well, that's why she wants to prove that she has a fourth interest in the place that her husband's grandfather once partly owned. You know that!" said Bert, a bit impatiently.

"What are you going to do, Bert?" Nan asked, for her brother seemed getting ready to climb inside the hollow tree.

"I'm going to see what's here," he answered. "Look for diamonds, of course."

"Why don't you just put your hand in and feel around?" asked Nan.

"Because the hole in this hollow tree is bigger than you'd think," replied her brother. "Why, it's big enough for me to crawl into! Look, Nan!"

He stepped aside so his sister could lean over and peer down through the trunk of the tree which was hollow like the smokestack of a boiler.

"Oh, it is big!" exclaimed Nan.

"If the lady hid any diamonds in here they fell away down to the bottom of the hole," went on Bert.

"Say, the hole does go away down, right into the ground!" said Nan. "I wonder what makes it?"

"Oh, the dirt may have been dug away by some boys, or maybe a bear had his den in this hollow tree and burrowed down through the roots and made a sort of a cave."

"A bear!" exclaimed Nan derisively.

"But this sure is a deep hole! I can't see the bottom," went on Bert, paying no attention to Nan's laughter.

"What are you going to do?" Nan asked, for Bert drew back as if puzzled.

"I've got to have a rope, so I can climb down in there and look for the treasure," he decided. "Say, Nan, do me a favor, will you?"

"What kind of a favor, Bert?"

"Go back to the house and get me a rope. I don't want to leave this place now. It looks just as if treasure might be here and if we both go away somebody may come and take it. Will you go get the rope?"

"Sure, I will!" agreed Nan. "But it will take quite a while to go to the house and come back with a rope."

"I'll wait for you," offered Bert. "And say, Nan, don't tell anybody about this."

"How can I get a rope without asking Dod or somebody?"

"There's a rope hanging out in the barn near the haymow. I saw it yesterday," replied Bert. "Get that one and don't say anything to anybody. Then hurry here."

"What if Flossie and Freddie see me?"

"You mustn't let them. Give them the

slip, somehow. They'll only make trouble if they come out while I'm searching for treasure. We can show them the tree later."

"I guess that would be best," agreed Nan. "I'll hurry all I can."

"Don't run too fast," said Bert kindly. "There's no special rush. But I would like to get down in there to see what's at the bottom."

"It's just as if the hollow tree was the chimney to a sort of cave in the ground, isn't it?" asked Nan.

"Sort of," admitted Bert.

Nan took another look into the black interior of the tree. The hole seemed to go down quite a distance. Then, bidding Bert good-bye, away she hurried across the fields back toward the farmhouse.

Bert, left to himself, looked around to make sure no one was watching his treasure hunt. He saw Nan disappear among the trees, re-appear, then disappear again in a hollow as the path wound over the hills in the fields. Then, eager to take another look at the queer place, Bert stepped inside the hollow tree. It was large enough around for

him to stand in and gnarled and twisted roots, holding among them some stones and dirt, gave him a footing. The inside of the tree was black, as though it had once been on fire.

"It's just the place for hiding treasure," said Bert. "I only hope I find it!"

Suddenly his foot slipped. The drift he was standing on gave way. Then his hands, that he had been using to hold to the edges of the hollow trunk, slipped. A moment later Bert felt himself tumbling down—down inside the hollow tree and down into the earth cave that seemed dug out beneath it.

"Oh!" cried the boy. "What's going to happen?"

Down and down he fell. Then everything grew black.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RESCUE PARTY

NAN BOBBSEY was thinking of many things as she hurried across the fields back to the barn to get the rope Bert wanted. Among her thoughts was this—that if some diamonds were found she might get one for herself.

"I wouldn't want a big one," she thought. "Just a little one for a ring. I hope we find them."

As Nan drew nearer the Wide Gate Farm's big barn she went more slowly, for she did not want to let Flossie and Freddie see her. So, coming in sight of the house and barns, Nan looked about to make sure the younger twins were not in sight.

They did not appear, and then Nan ran quickly to the barn, where she found the rope just as Bert had said she would.

It was a coil of light, but strong, rope, and

Nan could easily carry it over her shoulder.

"I must look like a cow-girl," she thought to herself, as she hurried out of the barn.

She was afraid she might meet Dod or some of the other hired men, or perhaps even Grandfather Ralston himself. If so, questions would surely be asked. She did not want this to happen. So she was glad when she met no one and was soon back on her way across the lots, carrying the rope.

"If Bert goes down inside the hollow tree I'm going down, too," thought Nan. The older Bobbsey twins were noted for doing queer things. Going down into a hollow tree after diamonds was nothing unusual for them.

Eager and excited, Nan hurried on, changing the rope from one shoulder to the other as it seemed to be growing heavier. At last she came within sight of the hollow tree.

"But where's Bert?" asked Nan, stopping short and looking about. "I left him here, and he said he'd wait, but he isn't here!"

Nan went up closer and looked inside the hollow tree. There was no sign of her brother. She walked around the old oak,

which was as big, if not bigger, than a barrel. Bert wasn't on the other side of the trunk.

"Bert! Bert! Where are you?" called Nan.

There was no answer.

"This is queer!" murmured the girl.

Again she looked inside the tree. Again she walked around it and looked behind some bushes and rocks near, thinking Bert might be hiding, to tease her.

But the boy was not in sight.

Again Nan called. Again there was no answer. She picked up the coil of rope she had laid down and, after one more look around, said:

"I guess Bert got tired of waiting and went home some way so I didn't meet him. But I hurried all I could! He might have waited for me. Only maybe he saw somebody who told him about another hollow tree that would be a better place to look for diamonds. Either that or Bert went home."

There seemed to be nothing for Nan to do but go back home herself. And by "home" she meant Wide Gate Farm, for that was the

home of the Bobbsey twins for the summer vacation.

With a last look at the hollow tree where she had left her brother, Nan hurried off, taking the rope with her. It was too valuable to leave on the deserted Lapham farm. The men who were to come later to dig out the medicine clay might take it, and Grandfather Ralston wouldn't like that.

Now if Nan had only known it, all the while she was walking about the old tree and calling her brother's name, Bert lay unconscious down in the earthy hollow beneath the dead oak. In his fall down the smokestack-like tree Bert had struck his head on a stone, and he was senseless. He lay in a heap at the bottom of a sort of cave over which stood the hollow tree.

It wasn't until Nan had started back home with the rope that Bert's senses came back to him. His head ached and he was bruised and sore, but, luckily, no bones were broken.

"Where am I? What happened?" was the first thing Bert asked himself as his senses

came back. Then he remembered it all. "I must have had a good deal of a tumble," he said.

He gently rubbed the back of his head, where there was a lumpy swelling, and then he got upon his feet. It was dark all around him, but overhead he could see a faint light and he knew he was looking up through the hollow oak tree.

Bert now gave up all idea of looking for diamonds or other treasure, and decided he must try to get out of the hole into which he had tumbled. He thought Nan might be up above, wondering what had happened to him.

"If she's got that rope and could lower it to me, I might pull myself up or climb out," thought Bert. "Ho, Nan!" he called. "Lower the rope."

He waited. There was no answer. Nan had come and gone when she, too, got no replies to her shouts.

"Well, I guess she isn't there," Bert said to himself. "I'll have to do the best I can alone."

He was feeling better now and decided

that the best way out was to try to climb up. But this was easier said than done. It was as if Bert were in a sort of well dug in the earth, with the hollow tree and its roots above his head. It seemed about ten feet up to the roots. The ground all around him was soft and Bert, taking out his knife, began to dig little holes, or pockets, which he thought he could put his hands and feet in, and so climb up.

But after a few attempts at this he knew it would never work. As soon as he put any weight in the hand and foot holds he had dug, they crumbled away and back he fell to the bottom of the pit.

"Well, this isn't much fun!" murmured Bert, the breath half jarred out of him by his last tumble after his climb. "I wonder how I am going to get out!"

Now Bert was a clever boy. He knew that if a thing cannot be done one way it is wise to try another.

"If I can't work my way out through the top by which I fell in, maybe I can dig my way out through the sides. This dirt is soft. But the thing I want to know is which way

to dig. Let's see. The tree is on a hill. The side of the hill was toward the west, and it was on that side that the tree was rotted away. So if I dig toward the west maybe I can dig my way out of the side of the hill. If I dig the other way I'd only be digging deeper into the hill, like a bear making his den."

Bert looked up and by noticing that most of the light was on that side toward which he was then facing, he decided this was the west and that if he dug that way he might in time make a hole in the side of the hill through which he could crawl out.

"For I'm sure I can never climb up," he said. "I'd need a rope; but either Nan didn't come back with it or else she came and went away again."

With his knife, which, luckily, had a large blade, Bert again began digging a hole, or tunnel, in the side of the pit in which he was a prisoner. He took care not to dig too hard, as the knife blade might suddenly spring shut and cut him.

As he loosened the dirt he piled it behind him as he had read of war prisoners doing

when they were trying to escape by making a tunnel.

Meanwhile, Nan, carrying the rope, had made her way back to the farmhouse. As she was going into the barn to put away the rope, she saw her mother, with Flossie and Freddie, walking along a path that led to a little glen where wild flowers grew.

"What in the world are you doing, Nan?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"She's going to make a swing out of that rope, I guess," said Flossie.

"Oh, let me help!" begged Freddie.

"No, I'm not making a swing," Nan said. "Bert wanted this rope so he could get down into the hollow oak tree to look for diamonds."

"Hollow tree! Diamonds!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Yes. But when I got back with it Bert wasn't there. I guess he came home because he was tired of waiting for me," and Nan told her mother the whole story as far as she knew it.

"Why, no, Bert isn't at home!" exclaimed Mrs. Bobbsey. "I have been looking for him

and for you. Something may have happened to him!"

"Maybe he's stuck in the hollow tree," said Freddie.

"No, he wasn't in the tree," declared Nan. "But he might have fallen through the roots. I didn't think of that."

"We must go to his rescue!" decided Mrs. Bobbsey. "Go and call your father, Nan. He is on the side porch with Gandpa Ralston!"

A little later the rescue party was on its way to help Bert Bobbsey.

CHAPTER XIX

FREDDIE'S TRAP

Down in the pit beneath the hollow tree, Bert Bobbsey was digging with his knife. The earth was sandy, which made the digging easy, or the boy would not have gotten along as well as he did. But his knife cut out great chunks of soil which Bert tossed behind him, in part filling the pit. But while he was doing this he was making room ahead of him so that he was not crowded.

Now and then he would stop and listen for any sound that might tell him some one was coming to his rescue.

"If they don't come pretty soon and lower the rope down through the hollow tree, I'll be out anyhow, I hope," said Bert.

He was making the dirt scatter fast, though he could not see very clearly, for it was rather dark down in the pit. He was under a

sort of shelf of his own digging now, so the light from above did not reach him as brightly as when he had stood directly under the old tree.

"I hope it doesn't cave in on me," thought the boy, as he remembered what had happened when Flossie and Freddie were digging for treasure. "Maybe I'd never get out then."

He was not sure he was digging in the right direction—toward the west. But there was no way of making certain and he could only hope for the best.

"Got to keep at it!" mused Bert. "If Nan didn't come back or if she came and went away again, they'll know back at the house that I'm still out here. Then, maybe, they'll come and help me."

But he was not inclined to give up and wait to be rescued. He wanted to help himself. So he kept on digging, and at last felt a real thrill when his fist, holding the knife, went through as if stuck into a hole.

"I guess I'm out!" Bert joyously cried when he saw light coming through the hole he had made.

In an instant he dug the hole bigger until he could thrust his head through it and then, looking around outside, he found that he had come out on the side of the little hill, on top of which stood the old, hollow tree. Below and in front of Bert ran the creek.

Meanwhile, Nan had led her father and mother, Grandfather Ralston, and Dod Pratt to the place where she had last seen Bert. Flossie and Freddie insisted on going to help in the rescue.

"Bert! Bert! Where are you?" called his father.

"I don't see him," said Mrs. Bobbsey, who was anxious and worried.

"I see him! I see him!" cried Freddie suddenly.

"Where? Show me!" begged Flossie.

"Right there! Sticking his head out of a hole!"

Freddie pointed to the slanting side hill, toward which the rescue party was at that moment walking. Then they all saw Bert. He had rescued himself.

He heard the voices and looked toward his father, mother, and the others. He gave a

shrill cry of welcome and began to enlarge the hole so he could crawl out.

Covered with dirt, his clothes mussed, and with a lump on his head where he had struck in his fall, Bert ran toward the others.

"Are you all right?" his mother asked, putting her arms round him.

"Sure!" Bert answered. "I just fell, that's all."

"Where'd you fall?" his father wanted to know.

"Through that hollow tree," and the boy pointed to the old oak on top of the hill.

"But why did you go in it?" asked Mrs Bobbsey.

"I told you, Mother," put in Nan. "He was after diamonds."

"Is that a new kind of game?" asked Bert's father, with a laugh. They could laugh now that the adventure had ended happily.

"No, it wasn't a game," Bert answered. Then he thought it best, as did Nan, to tell the whole story, beginning from the clew that was furnished by Mr. Pratt.

"No, it isn't all nonsense," said the hired man, when Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey looked at

him and smiled, "and I wasn't playing a joke on the children, either. I wouldn't do that. There are any number of folks around here who believe that poor lady lost or hid her diamonds somewhere on one of these farms. I've looked for 'em myself."

"Well, I hope somebody will find them," said Mr. Bobbsey. "But I think it's all nonsense and a wild goose chase."

"A goose chased me once," said Freddie seriously enough. "It was when we were at Meadowbrook."

"Oh, I 'member!" exclaimed Flossie. "He was a funny goose!"

"And I think it's funny to look for diamonds in a hollow tree," laughed Mr. Bobbsey. "But I'm glad no harm is done. Let's take a look at this place where you fell through, Bert."

They all inspected the hollow tree and the hole beneath it and then the hole through which Bert had dug his way out.

"You're a smart lad!" said Grandfather Ralston. "You ought to have found at least one diamond or a piece of gold after all that work by yourself."

"Maybe I will find a treasure some day," said Bert.

So it was a happier party going home a little later than had started off to rescue Bert a short time before. That night, after supper, while Flossie and Freddie were trying to make up their minds that they were sleepy enough to go to bed, the talk turned on treasure hunting. Grandfather Ralston said he had heard in Branchville that men would soon start digging the medicinal clay on the Lapham farm.

"And that will be real treasure for somebody, for there's lots of money in it, though it isn't exactly gold or diamonds," he said.

"Will Aunt Sallie get any?" asked Nan.

"Not unless she can find her papers to prove that she has a right to some of it," answered the old farmer.

"There are several Pry relatives besides Aunt Sallie who would get money out of the old farm if only the missing papers could be found," said Mr. Bobbsey.

"Didn't the lawyer you got her help her any?" asked Nan.

"No he couldn't without the papers,"

answered Mr. Bobbsey. "If you could only get a clew to what Mr. Pry did with them instead of looking for clews to gold and diamonds, it would help a lot," he said, smiling at Dod Pratt.

"I used to know Pry," said Mr. Ralston. "He was a queer fellow. Used to save all the rusty nails he picked up. Said he never knew when they would come in handy."

"Did he ever come over to this place?" asked Bert.

"Oh, yes, quite often. He used to get me to take care of things for him—an old pair of shoes or sometimes the old nails he picked up. Once he left me a jug. I think it's around somewhere yet."

"An old jug?" asked Bert.

"Yes, everything Pry had was old," laughed Grandfather Ralston.

"Maybe, if you have that jug yet and don't want it and there's nothing in it, I could take it when I go hunting for more treasure," Bert suggested.

"Do you want the jug to hold the diamonds you find?" asked his father.

"No, Dad, I want to carry water in it," was

the answer. "I got awfully thirsty to-day when I was digging. If I'd had a jug of water it would have been fine."

"Well, I'll see if I can get Pry's old jug for you some day," promised Mr. Ralston.

The next week was filled with happy days for the Bobbsey twins. They went to picnics, played games, helped around the farm and garden, and did some treasure hunting, even Flossie and Freddie taking their part in this "game," as their mother called it. The treasure seekers did not call it a "game," for all the twins were eager to have some of the stories they had heard from Jimmie Bigfish and Grandfather Ralston come true.

One day after the Bobbsey twins had eaten an early breakfast they saw Mr. Ralston, Dod Pratt and some other men all carrying baskets, starting for the orchard.

"What are they going to do?" asked Bert.

"Pick peaches," his mother replied.

"Oh, may we help?" cried Nan.

"Us, too!" echoed Flossie and Freddie.

"You'd only be in the way," said Mr. Bobbsey.

"No, let them come and help all they can."

said Grandfather Ralston. "The peaches are getting ripe faster than I counted on and I need all the help I can get in taking them off the trees, putting them in baskets, and shipping them to the city."

"Picking peaches! Oh, what fun!" shouted Bert.

A little later there was a busy scene in the peach orchard. Some of the trees were low, and by standing on boxes or barrels even Flossie and Freddie could reach up and gather the red and yellow fruit. Bert and Nan, being older, really were of much help in gathering the crop.

It was when Nan was emptying her small basket of peaches into a larger one that Flossie, who was a few trees away, rushed up to her sister shouting:

"Oh, Freddie's in a trap! Freddie's in a trap! Come quick and get Freddie out of the trap!"

CHAPTER XX

FLOSSIE'S KITTEN

DROPPING her basket so that the peaches spilled and rolled over the grass, Nan Bobbsey ran over toward a tree to which Flossie was pointing after giving the alarm about Freddie.

"Where is he?" asked Nan, seeing, by her little sister's manner, that something alarming had happened.

"He's in a tree," Flossie answered.

"But you said he was in a trap," Nan remarked.

"Well, and so he is! Freddie's in a trap and the trap is in the tree and Freddie's in the tree and he can't get loose and he can't get down and he's wiggling and you'd better come and help him!"

"I'm coming as fast as I can," answered Nan. "But I don't see how a trap could be in a tree."

"What's the matter?" Bert wanted to know, as he came down off a ladder to empty his basket of peaches and saw Nan and Flossie hurrying through the orchard.

"Freddie's in a trap," Nan answered.

"He's stuck," added Flossie.

"How could a trap be in a tree?" Nan asked her brother.

"Farmers sometimes put steel traps in trees to catch hawks, Dod told me," answered Bert. "Maybe there was a hawk trap in the tree Freddie is picking peaches from and he got caught in it."

"Oh, will he be hurt?"

"Not much, I guess," was Bert's answer. "A trap doesn't have to be very strong to catch a hawk. It may pinch Freddie a bit but it won't hurt him much."

"Freddie isn't pinched," said Flossie as she hurried along with her brother and sister, for Bert was now beside Nan. "Freddie's stuck! He's stuck in the trap. It's a sticky trap."

"What in the world do you mean by a sticky trap?" asked Bert.

"We'll soon find out," responded Nan. "I see Freddie now. He's over in that tree!"

Nan pointed to a tree into which the small boy had climbed to get peaches. The three twins could see him now, sitting on a limb not far from the ground, dangling his feet.

"He doesn't seem to be hurt," said Nan.

"Oh, he isn't hurt," Flossie made haste to explain. "He's just stuck and he can't get loose."

Wondering what could have happened, Nan and Bert hurried on until they came to Freddie, sitting on the limb. He was still dangling his feet and whistling.

"What's this—a joke?" asked Bert. "Get down off there! What did you want to scare Flossie for?"

"I didn't scare her," Freddie answered.

"Yes you did," retorted the little girl. "You hollered that you were stuck and you told me to go and get Nan or Bert."

"Well, so I am stuck!" declared Freddie. "Look! I can't pull myself loose! I can't get up!"

He tried to raise himself by pushing down with his hands on each side of the limb on which he sat. But his little knickerbockers

seemed fastened, in some way, to the tree branch.

"See!" called Freddie. "I'm stuck! It's just as if I was caught in a trap. That's what I told Flossie."

So the mistake had been made. There was no sign of a trap near Freddie. Then the older twins saw what had happened and began to laugh.

"He's sat in a lot of sticky gum that comes out of trees!" exclaimed the older Bobbsey boy. "That's why he can't get loose."

"I thought it was something like fly paper," said Freddie.

"Can you make him unstuck?" Flossie wanted to know.

"Oh, yes," Bert answered. "I'll cut him loose."

"Don't you cut my pants!" cried Freddie, as he saw Bert coming toward him with his knife opened.

"I won't cut you or your pants," promised Bert. "I'll just slice off some of the bark and the sticky gum and then you can get down."

As you know, if you have ever been in an

orchard, there is a very sticky sort of gum that oozes out of trees. Country children often chew it. If left on the tree branch long enough the gum dries and gets hard, but when it is fresh it is very soft and sticky. It was in a patch of this soft and sticky gum that Freddie had sat when he was picking peaches, and when he tried to get up, to move along to reach more fruit, he found that he couldn't. He was "stuck," as Flossie said.

Telling Freddie to lean to one side so he could reach under him, Bert used his knife blade to cut away the bark and the gum, leaving it still fastened to Freddie's knickerbockers. But in a short time Flossie's brother was cut loose, though his "pants," as he called them, were in a sad plight.

"Oh, but you look funny!" laughed Flossie, as Bert helped Freddie down off the limb.

"Anyhow, I'm not hurt and my pants will wash," said the little boy, which was true enough.

Dod Pratt had come over, hearing the excited talk of the children as they rushed to rescue Freddie.

"Need any help?" asked the hired man.

"Thank you, we're all right now," Nan replied. "But when Flossie said Freddie was in a trap I was frightened."

"It was a kind of trap," declared Flossie.

"Indeed, that sticky gum is," agreed Mr. Pratt. "Often June bugs or other insects get trapped in that sticky gum. Well, if you're all right, I'll go back to picking peaches."

"I'm all right 'ceptin' that I have to go into the brook to wash my pants," suggested Freddie.

"Don't try anything like that!" laughed Nan. "I'll take you to mother and she'll get you some clean knickers. You can leave those to be washed."

"All right," agreed Freddie. "These feel kinder funny!"

So Freddie went off with Nan, while Flossie and Bert kept on picking peaches, work in which Nan and Freddie joined on their return. By laboring hard, the crop of fruit was gathered before much of it got too ripe. When it had been shipped to the city to be sold, Grandfather Ralston said he could breathe easier.

"We farmers have to depend on our crops

to make a living," he remarked. "If a crop is lost we don't make any money."

"Then you have to look for treasure, don't you?" asked Bert.

"Well, I guess if I depended on treasure hunting to make a living I'd be pretty poor!" chuckled the farmer.

After the peach-picking, at which the Bobbsey twins had worked hard, there followed several days of fun. They went swimming in the creek and Bert found an old boat, on which he and Nan hoisted a sail, taking the smaller children for a ride on a safe place in the river.

"If there was an island we could be shipwrecked on it," said Freddie, as he sat in the boat, holding one of the ropes of the sail, which was made from an old horse blanket.

"What's the fun of being shipwrecked?" Flossie wanted to know.

"You can pretend to be pirates and have things to eat," Freddie suggested.

"I guess that's the main idea," laughed Bert. "You want a picnic."

"Why couldn't we have one in the boat?" suggested Nan. "We could take our lunch

and maybe camp on an island, if there's one in the river."

"There is an island," Bert said. "Dod Pratt told me about it. It's a nice place, he said. But he told me not to drink the river water."

"We could get that old jug Grandfather Ralston said Mr. Pry left with him, and take that full of water," suggested Nan.

"Say, that's an idea!" agreed Bert. "We'll do it to-morrow!"

They sailed about a little longer, going down almost to the island where, Freddie declared, they were going to be "shipwrecked" next day. Then the older twins worked the boat back to the little dock not far from the farmhouse and they all got out.

They wandered back home across the fields as the afternoon was passing. Flossie and Freddie had run on ahead, Bert and Nan walking more slowly. Pretty soon Flossie came running back to call:

"Oh, I found a nice little red kitten! Come and see it!"

"A red kitten!" cried Nan. "Where?"

"Over in a little hole near a big rock. Oh, it's such a cute kitten!"

"I only hope it isn't a skunk she has seen," murmured Nan. "They look and play like kittens."

"No skunks I ever heard of are red," declared Bert. "I guess she saw a red rock down in a hole and thinks it's a kitten."

"It is a kitten and it's red!" insisted Flossie. "Freddie's over by it now! Come on and look!"

Wondering what it was the small twins had discovered, Nan and Bert followed Flossie into the deeper grass.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BROWN JUG

BERT and Nan Bobbsey, following Flossie, saw that she was aiming her steps toward some tall weeds and grass in the middle of the field, above the tops of which Freddie's head could be seen.

"Is the red kitten there yet?" called Flossie, as she came nearer.

"Yes, she's down in the hole," answered Freddie. "I tried to coax her out, but she won't come."

"There *can't* be any *red* kitten," declared Bert. "It must be some other kind of an animal."

"A wild animal, do you suppose?" asked Nan.

"We'll soon see what it is," answered Bert.

Eagerly, Flossie led her older brother and sister to the place. There was the big rock

amid a clump of weeds and brush and Freddie was standing close beside it.

"There 'tis!" the little fellow cried, pointing, as Nan and Bert came up beside him. "Look, quick, before the red kitten hides in the hole."

Bert and Nan had a glimpse of a sharp, long nose, two bright eyes, and a reddish body of fur darting into the hole as they came up. Evidently the "kitten," had taken fright at seeing so many people crowding about.

"Why that's a fox!" cried Nan, at the sight of the reddish animal. "It's a baby fox!"

"A fox!" exclaimed Freddie.

"Sure! It's just the place for a fox den, right here," said Bert. "The mother fox must be away and the little one came out to play."

"I saw it first, and then I showed it to Freddie," declared Flossie. "I thought it was a red kittie."

"It's a wild fox," said Bert. "It's a wonder that it let you get close enough even to look at it. A fox is very wild."

"I didn't try to rub it," said Freddie, who

had been left on guard while Flossie went to get Nan and Bert.

"It's a good thing you didn't," declared Nan. "It might have bitten you."

"Come on out, red kittie! Come on out!" invited Flossie, stooping to look into the hole. "We won't hurt you. I like you."

But the little red fox did not so much as poke out its sharp nose. Perhaps he thought it had been near enough to danger. At any rate it remained hidden, much to the disappointment of Flossie and Freddie.

"You were lucky to see as much of the fox as you did," said Bert. "Generally they slink along and nobody sees them."

"I wonder where the mother fox is," put in Nan.

"Probably hiding somewhere around here watching us and waiting until we go away," Bert answered.

If the mother fox was around she did not show herself. And, after waiting a little longer but seeing no further sight of the baby animal, the Bobbsey twins walked on. For it was nearing time for supper and they must be at the farmhouse.

It was while the children were crossing a large lot in which, at different times, Grandfather Ralston kept cows and sheep, that Freddie saw a pretty striped chipmunk running along a stone wall. Chipmunks love to make their homes in such places.

"I'll catch him!" cried the little fellow, and away he raced after the "ground squirrel," as chipmunks are sometimes called.

But Freddie would need to be a much faster runner than he was to catch Mr. Chipmunk, as the little boy soon found. For the striped creature rapidly ran away down the fence and then, safe from capture, sat up on its hind legs and looked back at Freddie, scolding in a high, shrill voice.

"He's mad at you," laughed Flossie, who had run a little way with her brother.

"I wouldn't hurt him if he'd let me catch him," said Freddie, who sat down on a stone to rest, for he was rather out of breath from his run.

The others joined him and, for a few moments, they all stood there. Nan and Bert were looking at the pretty clouds which gathered as the sun was about to set and

Flossie and Freddie were trying to see how many different kinds of moss they could find.

Presently Flossie, who had gone down into a little hollow between two hills with Freddie, came running back with her twin at her heels Flossie shouted:

"Oh, wild West! Wild West!"

"What in the world does she mean?" asked Nan.

"I don't know," answered Bert.

But they found out a moment later, for following Flossie and Freddie came a whole herd of sheep, led by an old ram with long, curved horns.

"Wild West! Wild West!" cried Flossie again, almost falling in her haste.

"It's a cattle stampede!" shrieked Freddie. The little twins had probably got the idea of "Wild West," from pictures which they had seen in the movies.

"Oh!" exclaimed Nan, as she watched the sheep led by the ram following Freddie and Flossie toward where she and Bert stood. "Oh, what are we going to do?"

"They won't hurt us," declared Bert. "I guess," he added, for he was not sure.

"If that is old Sim, he will!" declared Nan.

"'Tisn't old Sim," Bert replied. "He's shut in his pen. I saw him before we came away. Besides, this ram is smaller than Sim."

"But his horns are just as big and maybe he can butt us just as hard," said Nan, who was frightened.

"What are they chasing us for, anyhow?" panted Freddie, as he reached his older sister and brother somewhat behind Flossie.

"I guess they think you have salt for them," suggested Bert.

"Make them go away!" begged Nan. "Shoo! Go away!" she cried.

"They won't go if you take them for chickens!" chuckled Bert. "You can't shoo sheep!"

"Well, you tell them to go away, then, if you know how," retorted Nan.

By this time the flock had almost surrounded the children, but even the ram did not seem to intend any harm. Some little lambs rubbed their cold noses into the hands of Flossie and Freddie.

"I'm not afraid now!" laughed Flossie,

clasping her fingers in the soft wool of a lamb's back.

"I'm not, either," declared Freddie. "I—now—I just ran to tell you and Nan the sheep were coming," and he looked at Bert.

"Oh, all right," Bert answered, with a laugh. "No, I guess there isn't any use of being afraid. These sheep are gentle."

So it proved, and aside from nosing the children, probably in the hope of getting some salt, the animals did nothing, not even the ram, who was the leader of the flock.

"I wish I had some salt," Bert remarked as the sheep, bleating and milling, crowded around the children. "It would make them go away."

"I've got a few cookies left in my pocket," said Nan, for when they went out to play earlier in the day she had taken a little lunch for the small twins.

"Give 'em to me and I'll see what I can do. I can throw farther than you can," said Bert.

Though the sheep were not harming the Bobbsey twins, the animals so crowded around them that the children could hardly move. They wanted to get out of that field

into the next one where there were no animals.

Nan handed Bert the cookies. Pushing his way to an open place, Bert let the ram smell the food. Then, throwing it as far from him as he could, the boy waited to see what would happen.

With a loud bleat the ram darted away to pick up the cookies, and as sheep always follow a leader, the whole flock turned and raced after the ram, leaving the children in a cleared space.

"Now's our chance!" cried Bert. "Come on—run!"

He took hold of Freddie's hand while Nan held Flossie's and toward the fence they raced. In a moment they were safely over it.

Afterward they laughed at the adventure, but for a time it seemed serious enough.

There was much laughter around the supper table that evening when the children told about their adventures with the red "kitten" and the flock of sheep.

"That's all they wanted—salt," said Grandfather Ralston. "I guess they're getting hungry for some. I must take some lumps to them to-morrow."

"Doesn't salt make sheep thirsty?" asked Freddie, who was always wanting a drink, it seemed.

"I suppose it does," said Mr. Bobbsey, who had been on a trip to the city by railroad that day, and who had just returned. "But if you are thirsty it makes water taste so much the better."

"That's right," agreed Freddie, passing his glass to be filled once more.

"Talking about getting thirsty," said Bert, "that's what we often get when we're playing, and we were thinking of going camping for one day on that island in the river. Could you let us take that old jug you said Mr. Pry left with you?" he asked the farmer.

"Yes, if I can find it," was the answer. "Last time I saw it it was out in the barn."

The next day, as it was sunny and warm, Bert and Nan decided to go on their little boat trip down the river, taking Flossie and Freddie with them, to camp on the island.

"We'll play shipwreck and drink water out of the jug!" declared Freddie.

"Well, first we have to find the old brown jug," said Grandfather Ralston. "Come on

out to the barn and I'll look for it. I don't know why Pry left it with me."

The jug was found on a rafter in the barn, covered with dust and cobwebs. But Mr. Ralston washed it clean on the outside by holding it under the pump.

"Got to be cleaned inside, too, before you can use it," said the farmer. He pulled out the cork and, as he did so, there fell out of the jug a small, folded paper.

"What's that?" asked Bert, picking it up. "There's writing on it."

"Oh, I guess it's something Pry must have left in the jug and forgot about," Mr. Ralston said. "I'll take a look at it later. There, the jug's clean," he added, as he put the paper in his pocket and finished the rinsing. "Have a good time now."

Away hurried the Bobbsey twins, little dreaming what a part in the treasure hunt the old paper found in the jug was going to play.

CHAPTER XXII

THE OLD STONE MILL

"ALL aboard!" cried Freddie Bobbsey.

"All them that's coming to the shipwreck island come on!" shouted Flossie.

"You mustn't say it that way!" corrected her twin brother. "You must yell 'all aboard' the way I do."

"I guess if you yell that way I don't have to," Flossie said. "Anyhow, we're all here that's coming, anyhow."

"The boat won't hold any more," chuckled Bert. "Are you ready, Nan?"

"Yes. But do you think we'd better sail down to the island? There's quite a wind."

"Oh, I know how to manage a boat," declared Bert. And, to do him justice, he did. His father's lumber dock was right on Lake Metoka and Bert had a small skiff of his own that he had learned to sail.

The boat he and Nan had rigged up from an old "scow," as Bert called it, that he had found in the creek, was not a very fast craft. But it was safe. The horse blanket sail was hoisted and, using an oar to steer with, Bert saw that his crew was on board and then called to Freddie:

"Cast off!"

"Cast what off?" the smaller boy wanted to know.

"Cast off the mooring rope," and Bert pointed to the one that held the boat to the dock.

"Oh!" murmured Freddie. "Why didn't you say untie it?"

"If you're going to be a shipwrecked sailor on an island you must talk ship fashion," laughed Nan. "And 'cast off,' are the words to use."

"All right, she's cast off," said Freddie.

The wind filled the blanket sail and down the river, which did not have much of a current here, went the *Ram* as Bert and Nan had named the craft.

"This is fun!" exclaimed Nan, as she and Flossie sat together on one seat, in charge of

the lunch and the jug of water they had brought with them, for Bert was managing the sail and Freddie insisted that he be allowed to steer with the oar they had brought along for a rudder.

"Lots of fun!" agreed Flossie.

"Wait till we get shipwrecked on the Pirate Island!" exclaimed Freddie. "That'll be more fun."

Down the river they sailed, pretending they were on a voyage of discovery. Bert, assisted by Freddie, handled the *Ram* well, and in a short time they had reached the island. It was a small one, covered with trees and bushes, and made a wonderful place to play shipwreck.

"Be sure the boat is tied fast," warned Nan as she watched Bert winding the mooring rope around a tree that grew near the edge of the island. "I don't want to have to swim home if it drifts away."

"I'll make her fast, Captain!" said Bert, pretending to talk in a deep voice like a sailor.

Once he and Nan had gone out in a boat at home, but, after landing on an island in

Lake Metoka, they had forgotten to make the boat secure and it had drifted away. They were marooned on the island several hours before their father, seeing the boat drift past his dock, set out to rescue the little sailors.

So this time Bert made sure the *Ram* would not drift away while he and the others were having fun on "Pirate Island" as Freddie called the place, and Nan made a last inspection of the knot.

For a time the twins wandered about, looking the place over. Then Flossie and Freddie discovered a "cave," as they called it. Really, it was nothing more than a hole under the roots of a tree that grew on a little mound. But it was just what Freddie needed to complete his "pirate" game and he and his little sister had some fun in the small cavern.

Bert and Nan wandered about for a while. Then, as they had brought poles and lines they tried to catch some fish. But they had no luck.

"It's a good thing we brought along something to eat," said Nan, when the fishing was

abandoned, none of the bait having been even nibbled.

"Yes, and I guess it's about time we had lunch," her brother remarked. "Where are Flossie and Freddie?"

"I'll call them."

The small twins did not need much calling to bring them to the place where Nan set out the picnic meal on a flat rock in the shade. Mrs. Ralston had put up a fine lunch, and it was eaten down to the last crumb. Freddie's frequent drinks were supplied from the brown stone jug that had once belonged to Aunt Sallie's Grandfather Pry.

"I wonder what that paper was that fell out of this jug," said Bert to Nan when they were sailing home later in the afternoon, the fun on the island having come to an end.

"I guess it was an old bill, or something like that," she answered.

"I'm going to ask Grandpa Ralston about it when we get home," decided Bert.

But when the children got back after their picnic they found some excitement going on at Wide Gate. Sim, the old ram, had broken out of his pen and had engaged in a fight

with the other ram of the flock—the ram to which Bert had tossed the cookies. It took Dod Pratt, Mr. Ralston and some other men a good while to separate the fighting rams. Luckily, neither was hurt, and after some hard work Sim was locked in a box stall in the barn.

"I'll get rid of him," said Grandfather Ralston when the excitement was over "Sim doesn't mean any harm, but he makes a lot of trouble, like a lot of folks I know.'

So it was not until almost bedtime that Bert found a chance to ask:

"What was that old paper from Mr. Pry's brown jug, Mr. Ralston?"

"Bless my hay rake, I forgot all about it!" exclaimed the jolly old farmer, pulling it from his pocket. "I never even looked at it. Maybe it's just a paper saying where the jug was bought."

But when the paper was spread out on the table under the rays of the lamp, it was seen to be a wrinkled document with some writing on it.

"That's Mr. Pry's writing," said Mr. Bobbsey. "It is very queer and just like

some that Aunt Sallie showed me. She had some of his old letters."

"What does it say?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

Slowly Grandfather Ralston read what was written:

"If you want to know my will,
Go look in the old stone mill."

That was all. Just two lines. Mr. Ralston read them over again and murmured:

"Strange! Very strange! But then Pry was that way."

"What does it mean?" asked Nan.

"Well, I should say," answered Grandfather Ralston, "that the old gentleman made his will and hid it in the stone mill."

"Did he have a stone mill?" asked Mr. Bobbsey.

"Well, there was one once on the Lapham place," said Mr. Ralston. "But there isn't much left of it now. It's in ruins."

"Did anybody ever look there for the papers Aunt Sallie wants to prove her claim to a share of the farm?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"I don't know that they did," was Mr. Ralston's answer. "Until now nobody ever suspected that Pry had ever hidden anything in the old stone mill."

"Well, I'm going to look there to-morrow!" declared Bert.

"I'll go with you!" stated Nan.

"Now look here!" warned their father. "No going around old mill ruins that aren't safe!"

"Oh, the place is safe enough, I guess," put in Mr. Ralston. "But I don't believe anything will be found to help Aunt Sallie. It's just another of Pry's queer doings, same as putting that verse in the old brown jug and then leaving it with me and not saying a word about it. Just like Pry!"

"Well," said Bert, as he arose to go to bed, "I'm going to have a look around the old stone mill to-morrow."

"So am I!" added Nan.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SECRET ROOM

THE next day it rained. When Nan and Bert Bobbsey looked out of their windows at Wide Gate Farm early in the morning—for they had awakened early to go treasure hunting—the drops were splashing down hard and the wind was blowing.

"It's just like the day Aunt Sallie Pry fell into the gutter," said Freddie, as he pressed his nose against the glass as he and Flossie had done before.

"It's worse!" Flossie declared.

"It won't be any fun hunting for the old mill in this storm," said Nan as she came out of her room, dressed to go down to breakfast just as Bert came from his.

"But you're going, aren't you?" her brother asked.

"Of course I am. I want to find out what Mr. Pry hid."

However, Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey had something to say about this, and when the two older twins would have put on rubber coats and boots to start off in the storm, their mother said:

"No, my dears! I can't let you. You must play in the house or out in the barn until it stops raining."

"Oh, Mother! Please let us go!" begged Bert.

"We want to look for what Aunt Sallie's Grandpa Pry said he hid in the old mill!" added Nan.

"There will be plenty of time another day, when it doesn't storm," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "Besides, I don't believe you'll even find the old mill. Grandfather Ralston says it is nothing but a ruin, overgrown with brush and weeds. It's hard to find unless you know just where to look."

"We can find it!" declared Bert. "I asked Dod Pratt about it. It's up the glen where the creek used to run before the course was changed. We can find the old mill all right."

"Well, maybe you can," admitted Mr. Bobbsey. "But if you do you will not find

any treasure in it, or anything that Mr. Pry hid. I think that old man was out of his mind. The way he left the secret message in the brown jug shows that. I only tell you so you will not be disappointed."

"Well, maybe we won't find anything," admitted Nan.

"But we'd like to go have a look," added her brother.

"After the rain," was Mr. Bobbsey's last word, and it had to be taken.

So the Bobbsey twins made the best of it, for even Flossie and Freddie had counted on going to look for the old mill. They played in the attic until Freddie, trying to see what was in a dark corner near the eaves, got his head caught and caused no little excitement until Bert and Nan pulled him out.

Then they managed to get to the barn between showers, and there they had plenty of fun, though, nearly all the time, Bert and Nan were thinking about the old mill and every now and then they would run to the doors to look out to see if the rain had stopped.

They were very impatient and fretted a

good bit. But at last the day passed and, though it rained harder than ever in the night, Grandfather Ralston said he thought it would clear by morning.

However, it did not, and it was not until nearly noon the next day that the clouds rolled away and the sun shone. Then Bert shouted:

"Come on now! We'll go to look for the old mill and hunt treasure!"

"It won't be exactly treasure," said Nan. "I mean like gold or diamonds that are hidden, the way Jimmie Bigfish and Mr. Pratt talked about."

"No, not that kind of treasure," admitted Bert. "But if we could find what Mr. Pry hid it might help Aunt Sallie to get some money."

"I hope we can," said Nan. "Aunt Sallie is very poor."

"We'll slip off without telling Flossie and Freddie," whispered Bert to Nan. "They'd only be in the way. And maybe we'll find some gold treasure, anyhow. Dod Pratt says that mill was running to grind corn when there were Indians in these parts. And

wherever there were Indians there was fighting. Maybe some of the white settlers hid their gold in the old mill."

"Maybe," said Nan. "Well, come on. If we wait much longer Freddie and Flossie will come in from the barn where they went to get some eggs, and we'll have to take them or else there'll be a terrible fuss."

"That's right," agreed Bert.

A little later he and Nan were hurrying over the back lots toward the glen where, many years ago, a grain mill had stood. Its wheels had been turned by a stream of water that then ran down the glen. But, in time, the course of the stream had turned so that now the glen was dry. And the mill, as Grandfather Ralston had said, had fallen into ruins, so overgrown with weeds, trees and bushes that it was hard to find.

"But we'll find it!" declared Bert.

Not stopping by the way as they often did when they were out for fun and adventures, Bert and Nan hurried to the glen, taking a path the hired man had told them about. If they thought that finding the ruins of the old mill was to be easy, they were disappointed.

Bert and Nan plunged into many a thicket of weeds and underbrush, and examined many piles of stone before, at last, Nan, turning a bend in the glen, gave a shout of joy.

"What is it?" called Bert, who was a little behind her.

"I've found it!" Nan yelled.

It was true. She had come upon the ruins of the old mill. Some of the walls were standing, but the water wheel had rotted away. At one side was a doorway by which the Bobbsey twins could go in, which they did, after looking to make sure it was safe.

This part of the mill, which seemed to be the entrance, was in the best condition. Outside of that hardly anything was left. It was dark and silent.

"There doesn't seem to be anything hidden here," said Nan, speaking in almost a whisper.

"No, not that I can see," agreed Bert. "But we'll look around a bit."

There were piles of rubbish in the corners. They poked among them, but found nothing. There was a beam, forming a sort of shelf on one side of the room. It was too high for the

twins to reach or to see if anything was on it. But Bert found a tree branch and ran it along the ledge.

"Mr. Pry might have hidden something up there," said the boy. However, he could knock nothing down and threw the stick away.

The two were about to give up and go outside when they heard a noise and voices.

"What's that?" asked Nan.

Before Bert could answer one of the voices shouted:

"Nan! Bert! Where are you?"

"It's Flossie and Freddie!" Nan exclaimed, with a sigh, and so it proved. The smaller twins came tramping in, smiling broadly.

"How'd you get here?" asked Bert.

"We followed you," Freddie answered.

"We saw you go," added Flossie. "But we kept quiet 'cause we thought maybe you'd send us back."

"Well, I guess we would if we had seen you!" chuckled Bert. "But you're here, anyhow."

"What you doing?" Flossie wanted to know.

"Looking for treasure?" asked Freddie.

"Sort of," Bert admitted.

"But we haven't found any," said Nan.

The smaller twins, of course, had to look about the old mill and poke in the corners as their brother and sister had done. Then Nan called:

"Come on now, we'll go out! It's damp in here and you might catch cold."

Freddie was still poking away in one corner. There was a pile of wood there, and the little fellow tossed aside the sticks.

"What do you think you'll find?" asked Bert.

Suddenly Freddie gave a cry. There was a rattle of the wood and the little fellow disappeared from sight.

"Oh!" cried Nan, rushing forward.

Bert sprang toward the spot where he had last seen his small brother. There was a hole where the pile of wood had been and Bert, looking through it, saw Freddie standing safely a little below him, in a small, secret room, the small door of which had been hidden back of the pile of rubbish. Freddie had, without knowing it, pushed in the door.

which was so rotten it was almost ready to fall.

"Look here!" cried Bert, in great excitement.

Nan and Flossie hurried to his side. They, too, looked in the small secret room and saw Freddie there.

"Be careful!" warned Nan. "Maybe the floor will sink down with you!"

Bert was too excited to be careful. He tossed aside more rubbish until the doorway was wide enough for him to enter, though he had to stoop to do so. Then he went into the secret room where Freddie was.

"Maybe the treasure is in there!" exclaimed Nan.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TREASURE BOX

BECAUSE there was no door, window or other opening into the secret room except the small hole through which first Freddie, then Bert, had slipped, it was very dark in the place. It was only light enough near the hole for Bert to see that Freddie was all right. The two boys were standing on what seemed to be a solid floor, though because of the darkness a little way from the opening, Bert could not be sure of this.

"Don't go any farther, Freddie," he warned, "until I make a light so we can see what sort of a place this is."

"How are you going to make a light?" Freddie wanted to know.

"I have my electric flashlight," Bert answered.

Snapping on the switch, Bert threw the

powerful ray of light about. The secret room was shown as a small one.

"May I come in? Flossie called.

"Is there room?" asked Nan.

"Oh, yes," Bert replied, at the same time flashing his light on the floor and seeing that it was sound and whole. "There's just about room enough for the four of us."

So Nan helped Flossie to climb into the hole Freddie had discovered and then followed. As Bert had said, the secret room was not very large, though it really would hold perhaps ten persons with a bit of crowding.

"What's it for?" asked Flossie. in a rather frightened whisper, as Bert kept on flashing his light. "I don't like it here."

"I don't, either. It's clammy," Nan said, with a short laugh "But is there anything here, Bert—any treasure, I mean? That's what's important."

"I don't know. It seems to me this must have been a store room. There isn't any window in it or any door except the small one through which we came in. It couldn't have been used for anything but a store room."

"Or a place to hide things," added Nan. "What's that over in the far corner, Bert?"

She caught a glimpse of something as her brother swung his flashlight about. She now started toward it as the powerful rays of the little electric torch again brought it into view. There was a pile of wood in the corner, but half covered with the planks and boards was what seemed to be an old-fashioned desk.

"It is a desk!" exclaimed Bert as he held his light on it steadily. "Maybe—"

There was a creaking of wood.

"Look out!" warned Nan. "Maybe the floor will break!" She backed to be nearer the opening.

"Oh, I guess it will hold us," said Bert. However, he cautiously put one foot before the other as he did when testing the ice for skating.

The floor creaked but did not sink down and Bert took a few steps forward, holding his light centered on the old desk. His heart was beating fast. He thought he was about to find some treasure. He had often read of gold and other things of value being hidden in old desks.

Suddenly there was a swooping, swishing sound over the heads of the Bobbsey twins, followed by a squeaking noise.

"Oh!" screamed Flossie. "What's that?"

"A bat!" answered Bert, for he had seen a dark, fluttering shape dart out of the opening discovered by Freddie. "Only a bat. It won't hurt any one."

"Well, I hope there aren't any more!" Nan stated firmly.

Flossie squeaked, holding her hands over her hair, for she was bareheaded. She had heard that if a bat gets tangled in a person's hair it can hardly be gotten out. Of course there is no truth in this. Bats don't want to get tangled in anybody's hair. Bats want to fly about and catch mosquitoes.

"I guess there was only one in here," said Bert, with a laugh.

Once more he held the rays of his light on the old desk and walked toward it. Bert pushed aside some of the boards with one hand, holding the light in the other. Then he gave a cry of delight.

"What is it?" eagerly asked Nan.

"I've found a box!"

"A treasure box?"

"I don't know if it's a treasure box or not," Bert replied. "It's tin and it's got something in it. Wow! I've found something, anyhow. Let's get out in the light and see what it is!"

He turned to go, but Nan called:

"Take a look and see if there's anything else in the desk before you come away."

Bert did so, rummaging in pigeon-holes and drawers, but, aside from an old ink bottle and a rusty pen, found nothing. Then, with the tin box under his arm, he turned back.

"Climb out!" he told Nan and the others. "I'll hold the light so you can see."

But as the main room of the old mill was not as gloomy as the small room, it was easy to get back into it. The twins were covered with dirt and cobwebs, but Nan and Bert, at least, were triumphant and happy, for they felt that they had made a wonderful discovery.

Flossie and Freddie did not care so much about it, for they did not understand all this talk about treasure and Aunt Sallie Pry's missing deeds, papers, and such things.

"Only an old tin box!" exclaimed Freddie,

as he went out of the mill with the others.

"Has it got anything in it?" Flossie asked.

"Seems to have," said Bert, as he shook it. Something thumped inside.

"Doesn't rattle or sound like money," remarked Nan.

"Maybe the money is in a leather sack. It wouldn't rattle then," suggested Bert.

"I wish there was something to eat inside," sighed Flossie.

"You poor dear!" laughed Nan. "We'll go right home and you can have some bread and jam."

"I want some, too!" declared Freddie.

On the way home, while the smaller twins talked of what fun they were going to have next day at a picnic, Bert and Nan looked at the old tin box and tried to open it. But it was either locked or rusted so tightly shut that it could not be opened.

"We'll have to break it," decided Bert.

It was getting dusk when they reached the Wide Gate farmhouse. They had been gone longer than they knew, for the old mill was on the Lapham farm, some distance from the land of Grandfather Ralston. The twins

found their father and mother waiting for them.

"We couldn't imagine where you were," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

"We were treasure hunting," explained Bert.

"Did you find anything?" asked his father, with a laugh.

"This!" and to Mr. Bobbsey's surprise Bert held out the old tin box.

"Where'd you get it?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"In a secret room of the old mill!" exclaimed Nan, and the story was soon told.

"Hurry, Dad, open the box and let's see what's inside!" begged Bert.

"Maybe there's nothing," suggested his mother.

The Bobbsey twins watched their father eagerly as he got a hammer and screw driver and proceeded to open the tin box.

CHAPTER XXV

HAPPY AUNT SALLIE

Rusty as it was and frail as it seemed, the tin box was yet so strongly put together that it took Mr. Bobbsey quite a while to make a hole so he could break the lock and lift the lid.

"They made tin boxes better in the old days than they do now," said the father of the Bobbsey twins, as he laid aside the hammer and screw driver he had been using.

"Is it a very old box?" Flossie wanted to know.

"Nearly a hundred years old, I think," her father said.

"But has it got treasure in?" asked Bert eagerly. "That's what I want to know."

At first sight there appeared to be nothing in the old box but a yellow bundle. It was about eight inches long, three inches wide, and about two inches thick.

"A package of diamonds, maybe!" exclaimed Nan eagerly.

"No, a bundle of papers, I should say," remarked Mr. Bobbsey, as he held the package in his hands.

"What makes it yellow?" Freddie wanted to know.

"This is a piece of yellow, oiled silk on the outside," Mr. Bobbsey said. "Mr. Pry, or whoever put these papers in the tin box, wrapped them in oiled silk so they would not be spoiled by water and dampness."

"Only papers!" exclaimed Bert, as his father cut away the stiff, oiled silk and showed that, indeed, this was only what the bundle held. "Just papers! I thought I'd found treasure."

"No gold or diamonds?" asked Nan, in a disappointed voice.

"It wasn't much of a treasure hunt!" murmured Bert.

Mr. Bobbsey did not answer. He was busy looking over the papers he had taken out of the oiled silk. He read what was written on them. Then he exclaimed:

"This isn't the sort of treasure Jimmie Big-

fish and the others have been telling you about, Nan and Bert, but it is almost as valuable. These are the missing papers Aunt Sallie needs to prove her claim to a quarter interest in the Lapham farm. You have indeed, discovered a treasure—not the kind you were looking for, but something that will make Aunt Sallie very happy."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Nan.

"So am I," added Bert. "Though I wish I could find a little gold or a few diamonds."

"I don't believe there are any such things around here," said his mother.

"No, it's all talk," declared Grandfather Ralston, who had come into the room. "But what have you there?" he asked, and when the old papers were shown to him he added: "Yes, some of those are in Pry's writing. He wrote in a queer way. See, it's just the same sort of writing that's on the paper which dropped out of the jug."

He brought this to look at, and once more Bert and Nan read:

"If you want to know my will,
Go look in the old stone mill."

"Did he leave his will there?" asked Mrs Bobbsey.

"No, but here are deeds and other documents that will prove Aunt Sallie's claim," said Mr. Bobbsey. "I don't see any will."

"Pry's will was found years ago," said an old man, a neighbor, who had come in with Grandfather Ralston. "I remember about it. He had hid it in an old rubber boot out in his barn. His estate was all settled except this part, which afterward became the Lapham farm. Now that the deeds to that are found it can be divided among those who have a right to it, Mrs. Sallie Pry being one."

"We had better send her the good news," said Mrs. Bobbsey.

A night-letter was telegraphed to the old lady in Lakeport telling her to pack up and come to Wide Gate Farm to claim what she had long been wanting.

"What made Mr. Pry hide these papers in the old mill?" asked Bert of his father that evening.

"There is no telling," was the answer. "Old men do strange things. It would have saved a lot of trouble if he had left his will

and these deeds where they could be found, instead of hiding this bundle away where it might never have been discovered if it had not been for you children."

"Freddie really found it," said Nan, "for he uncovered the little doorway into the secret room."

"But if it hadn't been for Bert's flashlight gleaming on the old desk, even then the papers might not have been found," said Mrs. Bobbsey. "So you all had a share in the treasure hunt."

There was much talk the next day, while waiting for Aunt Sallie to come from Lakeport, as to why Mr. Pry had decided to hide the papers in the old mill. Of course no one knew for sure, and it could only be guessed that perhaps Mr. Pry hoped, before his death, to give the papers to Aunt Sallie or others of the heirs. But he did not, and for years there was wonder and trouble over them.

Mr. and Mrs. Bobbsey went with the twins to the old stone mill that afternoon and peered into the secret room. Mr. Bobbsey said the place looked as though whoever first built the mill intended to make a sort of office out of

the little chamber, and then changed their plans and made only a storage place of it.

It was found out that Mr. Pry, the grandfather of Aunt Sallie's husband, had once owned the mill, though he never used it to grind corn, for by that time the water power was gone and this made it impossible. However, it made a good hiding place for the queer, old man's papers.

Aunt Sallie arrived by train that evening, and the Bobbsey twins rode to Branchville in the auto with their father to meet her and bring her to Wide Gate Farm. Only part of the good news had been told her in the telegram. She had been told to come up to look over some old papers that had been found in a strange manner.

"What's it all about?" asked Aunt Sallie, when she had greeted the children. "Why are you looking so excited?"

"It's about your treasure," said Nan.

"What's that?" the deaf old lady exclaimed. "Did I bring a tape measure? No, child, what would I be doing with a tape measure? I'm not going to have any new dress made. Land sakes, I'm too poor for such nonsense."

"No, not *measure*—I said *treasure!*" and Nan shouted the word. "Your missing deeds have been found!"

"Well, my good land sakes! why didn't you say so at first, my dear, and not ask me about a tape measure?" said Aunt Sallie. "It appears to me children don't speak as plain as they used to! But is this true?" she asked, turning to Mr. Bobbsey. "Have they found Grandpa Pry's missing deeds?"

"They have," said Mr. Bobbsey. "And you will soon get your share of the Lapham farm. Others, too, who have been waiting to prove their claim, will now get their rights."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Aunt Sallie. "I'm so happy!" There were tears in her eyes, but they were tears of joy. "I'll not be poor any more now, shall I?" she asked the twins' father.

"No, Aunt Sallie. Your poor days are over."

"Well, then, maybe Nan wasn't so far out when she asked me if I had a tape measure," and Aunt Sallie smiled. "I think I can have a new dress after all."

"Two of them if you like," said Mr. Bobbsey.

"What's that? Did I see a dog named Mike? Oh, no, I don't know any dog but your dog Snap, and his name isn't Mike," and Aunt Sallie laughed happily.

"I said you could buy *two* dresses if you *liked,*" shouted Mr. Bobbsey.

"Oh, if I *liked!* Ha! Ha! Yes. I probably shall. I guess it must be the weather, but nobody seems to speak plain today. However, it doesn't matter. I'm going to have some money, I guess."

And when the papers were given to the lawyers and matters settled, Aunt Sallie received a goodly sum for her share in the Lapham farm, which was quite valuable because the medicinal clay had been discovered on it.

"Well, I know one thing I'm going to buy before I get even one new dress," said Aunt Sallie some time later, when Mr. Bobbsey brought her some money from the bank.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Bobbsey.

"Some presents for my little treasure hunters," and she looked lovingly at the Bobbsey twins. "They found my fortune for me and

I want to make them as happy as they have made me."

Mr. Bobbsey did not want Aunt Sallie to do this, but she insisted. Freddie was given not only a new hose for his toy fire engine but a whole new bigger and better machine for "squirting real water," as he proudly told his boy friends.

Flossie was given a new and wonderful doll. Nan had a fine, new tennis racquet, one of the best made, and Bert got the jointed fishing rod and nickel-plated reel he had long been wanting.

This would come in handy when taken by him on his next adventure told in "The Bobbsey Twins at Spruce Lake."

"I'm glad we came to Wide Gate Farm," said Bert, as he took his rod. "The fish are biting now. I'm going to catch some for supper."

"And I must try out my racquet," said the delighted Nan.

"And I've got to go get one of my new dresses tried on!" laughed Aunt Sallie. "Indeed, everything is lovely since the Bobbsey twins found my treasure for me."

Many happy days followed on Wide Gate Farm for Nan, Bert, and the others before they had to go back to school again. When Bert told Jimmie Bigfish and his sister Sunshine about the old mill, the Indian boy said:

"Well, sometimes you find treasure in one place and sometimes in another. You never can tell."

"No," agreed Bert, "you never can tell!"

THE END